

“As the Father has loved me” (Jn 15:9)

Towards a Theology of God the Father:
Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theodramatic Approach

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ABBREVIATIONS

I. Abbreviations used regarding the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar

<i>Credo</i>	<i>Credo: Meditations on the Apostles' Creed</i>
<i>CSL</i>	<i>The Christian State of Life</i>
<i>DJKU</i>	<i>Does Jesus Know Us--Do We Know Him?</i>
<i>DWH</i>	<i>Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"?</i>
<i>FF</i>	<i>In the Fullness of Faith: On the Centrality of the Distinctively Catholic.</i>
<i>GL 1-7</i>	<i>The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Volumes 1-7</i>
<i>HCE</i>	<i>Homo Creatus Est: Explorations in Theology, Volume V</i>
<i>LA</i>	<i>Love Alone: The Way of Revelation</i>
<i>MH</i>	<i>Man in History: A Theological Study</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter</i>
<i>NE</i>	<i>New Elucidations</i>
<i>"PSW"</i>	<i>"Patristik, Scholastik, and wir"</i>
<i>Rdr</i>	<i>The von Balthasar Reader</i>
<i>SI</i>	<i>Spirit and Institution: Explorations in Theology, Volume IV</i>
<i>TD 1-4</i>	<i>Theodrama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Volumes 1-4</i>
<i>TD IV</i>	<i>Theodramatik, Volume IV</i>
<i>TFG</i>	<i>The Threefold Garland</i>
<i>TKB</i>	<i>The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation</i>
<i>TL I-III</i>	<i>Theologic, Volumes I-III</i>
<i>UYB</i>	<i>Unless You Become Like This Child</i>
<i>WEL</i>	<i>You Have Words of Eternal Life</i>
<i>W&R1</i>	<i>Word and Revelation: Essays in Theology, Volume 1</i>
<i>W&R2</i>	<i>Word and Redemption: Essays in Theology, Volume 2</i>
<i>YCY</i>	<i>You Crown the Year with Your Goodness</i>

Note: the abbreviation *TD* refers to both the English and the German versions. Roman numerals designate the German, Arabic the English volumes.

For the most part, quotations in this study will be given in English. Whenever possible I have used the existing English translations of Balthasar's works. I provide my own translation of the German texts where necessary; e.g., in those cases where no English translation is available. The English translations are generally from Ignatius Press (San Francisco) and the German from Johannes Verlag (Einsiedeln).

While we acknowledge that God transcends our distinctions of gender, we will follow Balthasar in using the masculine form of the pronoun with reference to the God of Jesus Christ.

II. Abbreviations used for works other than those of Balthasar

<i>CCC</i>	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
<i>DS</i>	<i>Enchiridion symbolorum: Definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum</i> , ed. H. Denzinger & A. Schönmetzer, S.J. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1963)
<i>GJC</i>	<i>The God of Jesus Christ</i> , by Walter Kasper
<i>IKaZ</i>	<i>Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift--Communio</i>
<i>ITC</i>	<i>The Documents of the International Theological Commission: 1969-1985</i>
<i>KD</i>	<i>Kirchliche Dogmatik</i> , by Karl Barth
<i>LThK</i>	<i>Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche</i> , J. Höfer and K. Rahner, eds.
<i>NRT</i>	<i>Nouvelle revue théologique</i>
<i>NT</i>	<i>New Testament</i>
<i>OT</i>	<i>Old Testament</i>
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Summa contra gentiles</i> , by Thomas Aquinas
<i>S. Th.</i>	<i>Summa Theologiae</i> , by Thomas Aquinas
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>ZfKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie</i>

Note: in referring to those works of the Church Fathers cited by Balthasar, the standard abbreviations for those works have been used.

Introduction

Christians of our day--across the categories of liberal and conservative--are comfortable affirming their religious solidarity with Jesus Christ, seeing in him the perfect model of one who loves his brethren "to the end" (Jn 13:1). A significant number of Christians, moreover, are taking part in the charismatic movement in which the Holy Spirit is given due attention as the giver of spiritual gifts. Virtually ignored, however, in the theological and devotional expressions that are representative of these common forms of contemporary Christian consciousness is the person and work of God the Father. It is not uncommon for believers to admit that they regard the Father "who dwells in unapproachable light" (1Tim 6:16) as remote from their Christian existence--indeed, in the worst of cases the notion of the Fatherhood of God is imputed to have an alienating affect upon their religious sensibility. The emphatic witness of the New Testament that God is love premierly *as Father* (see 1 Jn 4:7-9) has become increasingly unintelligible.

The factors that have contributed to this displacement of the mystery of God the Father in the modern Christian consciousness are many and diverse. There is, of course, the upheaval that is occurring within the domains of sociology and psychology in respect to the traditional patriarchal paradigms. Christians are also confronted with the modern philosophy of emancipation which demands self-liberation from all forms of dependence, and which defines human freedom as a

radical autonomy of self-creation and self-fulfillment. It is not difficult to understand the antipathy with which the adherents of this philosophy look upon the Father of Jesus Christ who summoned his Son to an obedience unto death (Phil 2:6-11; Heb 5:8). Finally, tendencies within the Western theological tradition itself have inhibited the development of a doctrine of God the Father on par with the specialized areas of Christology and Pneumatology.

In consequence, what is necessary today is a deepening of theological reflection upon the mystery of God the Father capable, on the one hand, of addressing the concerns and criticisms voiced by the aforementioned secular quarters and, on the other hand, of offering an authentic development of theological reflection on the Trinitarian Father which will enrich Christian faith-knowledge and experience. It will be our contention throughout this study that the trinitarian theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) opens up an approach to a doctrine of the Fatherhood of God particularly conducive to meeting this twofold need.

At the outset we need acknowledge that, from among Balthasar's vast corpus of theological works, not a one is to be found specifically devoted to an elaboration of a doctrine of God the Father. According to Balthasar's own description, the orientation of his theology is primarily Christocentric.¹ Nonetheless, Balthasar is often disposed to shift the theological point of reference from the incarnate Son toward the trinitarian Father. Indeed, this shifting of reference is integral to the full unfolding of a Christocentric approach, since the fundamental disposition of Jesus Christ is itself a turning toward the Father, in virtue of which he makes known to the world the God whom no one has seen (cf. Jn 1:1,18; 5:19f.). In accordance with the New Testament and especially the Johannine writings, Balthasar holds as a cardinal hermeneutical principle that "in everything that the Son is, in his talking, acting, and suffering, and indeed further in the very Person who reveals

¹ See, for example, *GL* 7, 262.

himself in all this...there is seen the absolute love of the Father--for the Son and for the world.”² Admittedly, Balthasar himself does not apply this principle so as to provide a sustained and comprehensive treatment of the Fatherhood of God. The task set before us, then, is to gather, examine, and interpret the scattered fragments of Balthasar’s reflections on God the Father--and even on occasion to develop certain germane theological insights which remain latent within his Christocentric assertions--in the course of producing a synthetic and schematic treatment that brings to the foreground the dramatic form of the Father as the personally generative origin and end of both the Christ event and the freedom of the Christian.

The resultant treatment is guided throughout by Balthasar’s contention that a theological doctrine of the Father which did not develop directly from God’s economic salvific action would fail to present the full dimensions of God’s Paternity. Balthasar bases his stance on the clear witness of the Christian Bible; according to it, the Father reveals himself in definitive fullness only on the stage of world history and in the unique event of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. If theological reflection is to do justice to God’s historical self-revelation, it must let itself be governed by this methodological principle found inscribed in the biblical data.

As intimated by the focus upon action as the primary aspect in view of which to understand the “first” Person in God, Balthasar’s own approach to offering an adequate rendering of the mystery of the Father is concentrated in the second part of his theological trilogy: *Theo-drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*. It is a fundamental principle of theodramatic theory that persons involved in the drama of salvation are to be understood on the basis of the action.³ Since the Father, as the One-who-sends, “appears” on the world stage in the mission of his Son, a theodramatic approach to a theology of God the Father endeavors to cast light on the aspects of the

² *GL* 7, 291.

³ See *TD* 3, 13-14.

Father's action evidenced in Jesus' performance of his (eschatological) role. What emerges is a configuration of the Father's dynamic mode of being God in the economy of Jesus Christ from which Balthasar can extrapolate to the realm of God's eternal, inner-trinitarian Fatherhood.

In our endeavor to follow Balthasar's lead through the terrain of his theodramatic theory, we will begin in Part One on the plane of profane dramatics in order to collect and identify theatrical categories, notions, and modes of expression to be taken up and used for the development of a properly *theodramatic* elucidation of the Father. More specifically, we will present an explication of the threefold elements of dramatic creativity (author, actor, and director), which Balthasar proposes as a metaphorical context through which to illuminate the threefold action of the economic Trinity. Particular attention will be given to Balthasar's notion of the auctorial mode of creativity in our effort to construct a definite profile of the Father-Author.

Crossing the threshold from theatre to theology we will move on to interpret Balthasar's theodramatic Christology in terms of God the Father's self-revelation in the person and mission of Jesus. Here too, albeit now within the sphere of strictly theological reflection, we will glean from Balthasar's theodramatic approach to the Christ event those modalities and aspects of the Father's action made manifest through the exegetical performance of his Logos become incarnate.

Part Two of our study will present a schematic ordering and examination of the modalities and aspects integral to the manner of being-divine proper to the Father. Preliminarily, we may identify the following: (i) the paternal mode of infinite freedom: unconditioned initiative as self-gift; (ii) the paternal kenosis; (iii) the paternal leaving-free; (iv) the paternal receptivity; (v) the paternal dependence and expectation; and (vi) the paternal affectivity of the immutable God. In regard to each aspect of the Father's mode of being God, we will develop an understanding in terms of its efficacy to engender its perfect reflection: the Son's begotten, answering mode of infinite love. Throughout our discussion we will show how the eternal and inner-divine event of the

Father's begetting the Son serves as ground and presupposition of the (utterly free *ad extra*) event of the Father's sending the Son unto the Cross and Resurrection, as well as the Father's creating and adopting mankind as his children in his eternal Beloved. That is to say, we will be providing a three-tiered systematic exposition of a doctrine of the trinitarian Father which moves from the Father of the eternal and consubstantial Son, to the Father of Jesus Christ, to the Father of creation and of the covenant of grace. In so doing we will attempt to demonstrate the consistency and congruence of Balthasar's insights regarding God's Fatherhood inasmuch as the form or structure of the Father's mode of being-divine (which emerged in his theodramatic Christology) is capable of illuminating as a coherent whole the mystery of God the Father in both the immanent and economic orders.

In the course of our study several of the most significant issues current in theology will be addressed, such as an interpretation of the Father's forsakenness in the passion and death of Jesus, a reinterpretation of divine omnipotence in terms of the Father's all-powerful powerlessness, the question of the possibility of coexistence (indeed of dramatic interplay) between infinite divine freedom and finite human freedom, an understanding of the immutability of God that allows for the Father's being affected in some way by his covenant partner's self-disposing, and an account of God the Father's generative act that sees as integral to it a properly paternal modality of receptivity. The distinctiveness of Balthasar's ideas as well as their continuity with the Christian theological tradition will be considered in conversation with the trinitarian doctrine of John Paul II, Jean Galot, and François X. Durrwell (chapter IV), as well as more generally with Origen, the Cappadocians, Thomas Aquinas, Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, and Jürgen Moltmann among others.

We will bring our study to a close with a final assessment of Balthasar's contribution toward a theology of God the Father. It is our hope that this study will indicate how Balthasar's thought can enable us to answer more adequately the questions and challenges raised by our

contemporaries to a doctrine of the Father of Jesus Christ, without vitiating what belongs to the definitive “deposit” of God’s self-revelation in the Christ event.

PART ONE

THE REVELATION OF THE TRINITARIAN FATHER: A THEODRAMATIC APPROACH

I

Theo-drama and the Metaphor of the Triad of Dramatic Creativity: Focus on the Author-Actor Relationship

With Newman, it is possible to regard the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as “a supernatural story, practically a stage play” in which “who the Author is” is disclosed by “what he has done”.⁴ Such a suggestion raises several questions: is it possible to show that the essential elements of “a stage play” possess an illuminative capacity as a metaphorical context through which to view the saving event of the economic Trinity? How helpful is it, for example, to consider the author of a dramatic production as a metaphor for God the Father? In what respect is God the Father’s self-revelation in the mission of Jesus something like the way the playwright is revealed in the dramatic production, without himself appearing on stage? Can the employment of this metaphor enhance the intelligibility of the primacy that belongs to the Father-Author and his activity in what concerns the drama of the world’s salvation?

These questions are addressed at length and, we think, with penetrating insight by Balthasar in the second part of his theological trilogy, *Theo Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*. In volume I, *Prolegomena*, Balthasar presents his analysis of the three essential elements of creativity at work in a dramatic production--the author, the actor, and the director--which analysis he places

in the service of the revelation of the economic Trinity.⁵ Because it is the aim of our first chapter to establish the metaphorical potential of this model on behalf of a doctrine of the trinitarian Father, our focus will be on the (Father-)author's relation to the (Son-)actor within the context of a theatrical drama: in particular, we will discuss the distinct mode of the author's activity in its relation to the actor's performance of his role, in which performance is embodied the "revelation" of the author. Consequently, our discussion of the Spirit-Director's task will be relatively brief.

A. *The Author*

A.1. *The author as alpha and omega of the dramatic production*

The author is the originator of the drama. As such he has "an ontological primacy over against the actor and director".⁶ He is the premier personal locus of and the one ultimately responsible for the play's meaning, intent (*telos*), coherent development, and final unity. The author is, as it were, the alpha and the omega of the drama, "standing at the point where the drama (which is to unfold between the characters and their freedoms) comes into being as a unity, so that...it may attain unity once more".⁷ The "antecedent context of meaning", "the antecedent unity", "the unifying form" within which the interplay of the characters develops lies in himself.⁸ Indeed, after the manner of one whose activity effects a kind of mutual indwelling, he in whom lies the unifying form enters into and guides his characters "toward a final unity".⁹ We can, then, with

⁴ *TD* 2, 11. See J.H. Newman, "The Tamworth Reading Room" (1841), in *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects* (1872), 296.

⁵ See in particular *TD* 1, 268-301; also *TD* 3, 532.

⁶ *TD* 1, 270. On the previous page Balthasar notes that "the primacy of unity in the author is ontological."

⁷ *TD* 1, 268-269. In addition *TD* 1, 261: "[T]he drama is an artifact, a work of art, behind which stands its originator, the author. For some distinct authority must be responsible for the integrity of the 'successful solution' that 'presents itself'." And *TD* 1, 262: "[T]he important thing is that a horizon is opened up for 'some solution or another', that is, the aspect of epiphany as such. The standpoint of the 'author' is entirely filled up by the creative activity of a unificatory endeavor that sheds light on existence."

⁸ See *TD* 1, 269-70.

⁹ See *TD* 1, 270.

Julien Green (speaking metaphorically) affirm: “The poet is God the Father as far as his characters are concerned.”¹⁰

A.2. *The author and his characters*

The author’s activity of entering into and guiding his characters entails a dialectic of self-disclosure and self-concealment. As author, his self-expression is proffered solely in the character(s) he creates. The character(s) proceeds from the dramatic poet as the latter’s “word”, and through the unfolding of the play’s action this “word” communicates “precisely what the poet has to say”.¹¹ The author, however, does not himself appear on stage; he remains hidden in his character(s).¹² It is possible to consider this auctorial self-concealment as expressive of a uniquely auctorial humility. For the author’s self-initiated concealment is one with the author’s bringing forth from himself an other--a character to be realized--such that he causes the character to speak in the first person; he “begets” in the character the capacity to be an “I” that is not the author (even while the character *is* simultaneously the “offspring” of the playwright’s self-expressive action).¹³ Self-expression on the part of the author, therefore, is of such humility that he does not clone his own “I”, but rather genuinely establishes a “not-I”, a distinct identity, upon whom he casts the spotlight. This act of auctorial, creative humility is an affirmation of the character as other; it bespeaks the kind of nurturing love that summons forth from the other the fullness of its unique possibilities of character.

At this point another auctorial dialectic comes into view: with respect to his creative activity the playwright is simultaneously above and in his characters--both transcendent and immanent in

¹⁰ Cited in TD 1, 268 from Julien Green, *Journal I* (Plon, 1938), 27.

¹¹ TD 1, 273.

¹² “The concrete presence of characters and things causes us to forget that of the author, who, like the creator, wishes us to search for him”, for “he has the privilege of disguising himself as a creator.” Cited from H. Gouhier, *L’Essence du théâtre* (1943), 228-29; in TD 1, 278.

¹³ See TD 1, 270.

relation to them.¹⁴ The author can call forth the possibilities of each character because his creative activity is done both from the distance that belongs to the determinative originator and in the proximity of a generative solidarity with and accompaniment of his characters.¹⁵ Clearly both modalities mean equally the author's involvement with his characters. Yet it is an auctorial involvement which is sufficiently creative to preclude "lording it over" his characters since the author involves himself only to promote the distinctiveness of the characters proceeding from him. Indeed here in his twofold involvement both above and in his characters we may again discern the author's altruistic humility: as he who conceals himself in distance and in nearness--even as he gives of himself--so that the other might "live". As A. W. Schlegel remarks: "The dramatic poet seems to have the ability to lose himself generously and magnanimously in other persons."¹⁶ According to Gabriel Marcel, "there is no dramatic creation without a certain self-alienation on the part of the author for the benefit of the beings for whom he gives life".¹⁷ The author must "enter into each of them as deeply as possible, in order to appropriate their different...ways of being and evaluating...[and at the same time] attain a higher justice that is related to selfless love and that allows him simultaneously to *be* the antagonists, to understand and transcend them."¹⁸ Schopenhauer describes this auctorial power of self-alienation thus: "They [the dramatic poets] transform themselves totally into each of the dramatic characters...and speak out of each one....Poets of the second rank transform their major characters into themselves." It is the first-rate

¹⁴ See TD 1, 270, 272, 276-78.

¹⁵ Here and throughout this chapter we use the term "generative" in the general sense of "having the power or function of generating, originating, producing"; *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1973). Of course the nature of the generative activity proper to the dramatic poet is infinitely dissimilar, if also similar in a metaphorical way, to the nature of the trinitarian Father's eternal, inner-divine generative act. When in chapter II we will cross the threshold into theological discourse, we will use the term "generative" in an appropriately differentiated sense, taking account of the ontological difference between God and creature.

¹⁶ TD 1, 274. Cited from Athenäumsfragment no. 140, in F. Schlegel, *Krit. Ausgabe* (1967), II, 187.

¹⁷ "L'influence du théâtre", *Revue des Jeunes* (Mar. 5, 1935), 355; cited by Balthasar in TD 1, 271.

¹⁸ Gabriel Marcel's *Les valeurs spirituelles dans le théâtre français contemporain. Orientations religieuses, intellectuelles et littéraires* (June 25, 1937), 788. Emphasis author's. Cited in TD 1, 271.

poet who is “immanent in all the characters”, who makes himself their companion, who “penetrates their world”.¹⁹

Surely the term “kenosis” may be used to characterize the auctorial dynamic as described above, even if Balthasar does not explicitly refer to it as such in his commentary on the foregoing passages. In view of the objectives of our study, employing the term in this case enhances the metaphorical capacity of the model of auctorial creativity. For consider what has been presented to us thus far: the dramatic poet, in an act of self-renunciation/-alienation, empties or outpours himself into the condition of the (posited) other, accompanying the character “from within” as a function of loving enablement. It remains necessary, however, to stress that the author does not thereby negate or render void his own mode of being and activity. On the contrary, it is only “by virtue of his mode of being, which permits him to be (and to work) completely *in* and completely *above* them [his characters] at the same time”, that the author shows himself to be the alpha and the omega of the entire production.²⁰ Accordingly, the auctorial kenosis includes this twofold dynamic: creative activity that entails the author’s entering into and selflessly fostering the distinctive otherness of his characters while retaining the fullness of his transcendent integrity as author. “[I]f the author”, says Balthasar, “is to be ‘God the Father to his characters’ he must not ultimately allow himself to be governed by their interplay. He must love his characters, and for that very reason he must cherish their autonomy. [Yet] he owes it to himself, however involved he may be in the fate of his characters, to stand *above* them, so that in the very last analysis he can embody their destiny”.²¹ This last phrase indicates a further element which coincides with the notes of humility and loving kenosis in the author’s relation to his characters, inasmuch as the author’s inherent primacy over them (in remaining “above them”) is essentially a mode of service for their sake: the author indeed

¹⁹ TD 1, 271-72. Cited from Arthur Schopenhauer, “Zur Ästhetik der Dichtkunst”, *Werke* (Insel) II, 1205.

²⁰ TD 1, 278. Emphasis Balthasar’s.

owes it to *the characters themselves* to uphold his own transcendent integrity (of identity/activity), since it is by his work of characterization that they in their turn receive, possess, and are sustained in an integrity proper to them within the constellation of the drama itself. It is from the unfailing integrity of the author that there proceeds the ultimate determination of meaning, the inner valuation, the “poetic justice”, and the final resolution or consummation of each character as well as of the entire play.²² Hence Balthasar’s warning: “Once the author is in the power of his character, the latter will come to no good.”²³

Still, precisely here, in the shadow of Balthasar’s warning, we must recognize what is perhaps the most profound paradox concerning the author’s activity. As we have previously discussed, the author “begets” his character with the capacity to be an “I” that is *not* the author, and concomitantly summons this other to (or calls forth from him) a kind of self-manifestation in which the character reveals its unique potentialities while simultaneously realizing them. Now this self-realization of the character before the creative regard of the playwright requires that the playwright “allow the character to develop in its own way”.²⁴ The author, as it were, “makes room” for the character whom he himself has endowed with a freedom of self-disposing.²⁵ In fact, the freedom of the character is testimony to the originaive power of the playwright’s own creative freedom; (hence it is for the author a self-disclosure, even while also a self-concealment since the created freedom is that of an other). Furthermore, inasmuch as the author’s “allowing/making room” (or

²¹ TD 1, 280. Emphasis Balthasar’s.

²² See TD 1, 75 regarding the comments by Sartre and Camus; and TD 1, 261, 279.

²³ TD 1, 281. Balthasar is citing E. Ionesco, *Notes et contre-notes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 180.

²⁴ TD 1, 276.

²⁵ TD 1, 274: “A.W. Schlegel describes the poet’s fundamental quality as a ‘magnanimity’ that gives room for [*die Raum gewährt für*] the rich variety of forms [in their otherness]....Once this room has been provided [*In dem zur Verfügung gestellten Raum*] they can appear ‘of themselves’.” Elsewhere Balthasar acknowledges that this auctorial disposition “calls for the theological model that Julien Green had invoked at the outset”; viz., “a free God who [as Father] makes room for created beings endowed with freedom”; TD 1, 277.

“leaving-free”/“letting-be”) in relation to his characters is intrinsic to his creative work,²⁶ we are confronted with the dialectic of a properly auctorial *receptivity* to his characters in his very *activity* of engendering them. That is to say, the activity distinctive to the author entails a receptivity that is creative of his characters, an auctorial receptivity that can only mean active fosterance of the being-created-other. Even more: insofar as properly generative receptivity is integral to the author’s activity, we can say that the author *exposes* himself to the distinct and developing identity of his characters.²⁷ Balthasar is pointing to the self-exposure of the author in his citation from Pirandello: “One cannot expect to give life to a character and emerge unscathed!”²⁸

If we compare the statements that conclude the previous two paragraphs [“Once the author is in the power of his character, the latter will come to no good”; and “One cannot expect to give life to a character and emerge unscathed!”], these appear at first glance to be contradictory. Does not auctorial receptivity and self-exposure with its concomitant affectivity (in the sense of able-to-be-affected) mean that the author is indeed “in the power of his character”? It is important to recognize, first of all, that this auctorial receptivity is freely self-initiated, since the character does not “exist” prior to its being created precisely by the author’s mode of activity/receptivity, of determining/leaving-free. Thus it is not as if the character in an originaive manner evokes this

²⁶ While Balthasar does not explicitly employ the terms “leaving-free” [*Freilassung*], “letting-be” [*Sein-Lassen*] and “letting-happen” [*Geschehenlassen*] in his section on the Author, yet these terms are very close in meaning to those of “allowing space” and “making room” [*Raumlassen; Raum offenlassen; Raum gewähren*] which he does utilize here. Moreover, not only does the present context justify their inclusion at this point, but their introduction anticipates their extensive use in Part Two of our study (especially chapter III, section D).

²⁷ In TD 1, 277 Balthasar quotes Kierkegaard’s remarks on the comparison between God and the dramatic poet as these reflections move from the realm of the theatre to the *Christian mystery* (“which alone”, asserts Balthasar, “can lift the veil that lies over the natural mystery of authorship”). According to Kierkegaard: “God is like a poet...[T]he poet’s relationship to his work...is also called his ‘creation’...[T]o love and to be loved is God’s only passion; it almost seems (infinite love!) as though he himself were bound by that passion, in the power of that passion, so that he cannot cease loving, almost as though it were a weakness, whereas it is of course his strength, his omnipotent love, to such a degree is his love above all change.” Inner citation is from Kierkegaard’s *Diaries* (1854), trans. T. Haecker, 4th ed. (1953), 631. For a discussion of Balthasar’s position on the issue of the Father’s affectivity and immutability, see Part Two, chapter III, section G.

²⁸ TD 1, 275. Balthasar cites from Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) in *Three Plays* (Methuen, 1985).

receptivity from the author (and in this way has power over him). It is, rather, that the author's generative receptivity, in its ontological primacy, is utterly gratuitous and proffered for the sake of the character. Accordingly, when we indicated above that there is a sense in which the character reveals itself before the creative regard of the author, this characterial self-revealing can only be called forth by the author's initiative.²⁹ Moreover, in revealing itself the character (figuratively speaking) presents itself to the author's determinative judgment, exposes itself to the playwright's deeming and disposing according to his ultimate dramatic purpose. Indeed, it may be that "the author does not approve of all his characters' provisional deeds and intentions".³⁰ This is why, on the part of the playwright, there is an "alternation of creativity 'from within' and encounter 'from without',...between allowing the characters to develop in their own way and guiding their interplay from a position of ultimate superiority"³¹--between the dramatic poet's receptivity to/leaving-free of the other and his defining/disposing of the other. We may say, therefore, that the character is summoned to a *corresponding* receptivity and self-exposure as well as to its own proper affectivity, in relation to the author's creative act. Yet in accordance with the "hierarchy" of the author-character relation it remains true that it is the author who is first to act in receptivity, exposing himself and rendering himself able-to-be-affected in relation to his characters, even as he is actively engendering them, summoning them before him, and fashioning their interplay.

A.3. *The author and the actor*

We have seen above that the author, by his creative activity, generates a character as his self-expression or "word", and that this "word" is posited within an encompassing constellation of

²⁹ Balthasar's phrase, "the creative regard of the author", is pregnant with the auctorial dialectic of originaive activity and generative receptivity.

³⁰ *TD* 1, 277.

³¹ *TD* 1, 276.

dramatic interplay and grounded upon a horizon of meaning established by the author.³² The author, moreover, both reveals and conceals himself in his “word” or character; that is, he expresses *himself* (as author) in bringing forth a created “I” that is *other* than he. Now this auctorial dialectic of self-disclosure and self-concealment carries over to the author-actor relation, inasmuch as the author’s self-utterance (his character) can only become “embodied” on stage in the actor’s performance.³³ The author, to be sure, does not appear on stage in the same way as the actor; “the author has power to make himself present in the actor, [albeit] *only* in him”.³⁴ The actor’s portrayal is in fact “where” the author’s self-expression is actualized.³⁵ Consequently, we ought not to consider the author’s activity as being in one place and its presentation by the actor in another; rather, “the dramatic work [which coincides with the author’s activity]³⁶ is made present totally and exclusively in the [actor’s] performance”.³⁷ Thus the dramatic poet is both hidden and made manifest in the work he establishes for an other and as proper to an other, that is, in the task he confers to the actor in disposing of the character/role. And as with the author-character relation, so here too this auctorial dynamic of self-disclosure in self-concealment is evidence of the author’s distinctive humility: by his own initiative, the author puts the actor “before” himself and directs the spotlight toward him, all in affirmation of the actor as other.

This affirmation of the actor as other than the playwright extends to the playwright’s handing over of the character he has created to the actor, for the latter’s interpretation. Yet again

³² See *TD* 1, 269-70, 273, 276-77, 279.

³³ See *TD* 1, 281.

³⁴ *TD* 1, 278: “Naturally, the idea that the author...could himself enter the immanence of the play in order to guide it to its goal remains totally extravagant: no one but the actor should appear on stage....[T]he author has power to make himself present in the actor, and *only* in him. The author remains hidden behind the reality of the stage.” Emphasis Balthasar’s.

³⁵ See *TD* 1, 281.

³⁶ Balthasar quotes with approval the following from Schiller: “*He* [the dramatic poet] is the work, and the work is *he*.” Emphasis author’s. Cited in *TD* 1, 273 from *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung in Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Fricke-Göpfert (Hanser) V, 713.

like the author-character relation, the nature of this auctorial affirmation (here of the actor) implies a dialectic between the author's defining/disposing of the other and his receptivity to/leaving-free the other. Certainly it is from the author that the character/role originally proceeds with a definite form, and it is by the author that the same character/role is ultimately disposed of within the context of the play's final resolution. At the same time, the playwright "explicitly and necessarily leaves room in his work" for a collaborating creativity on the part of the actor.³⁷ The author gives to the actor, "not only the 'task' of the role, but also the 'higher task' of entering into the horizon of meaning that encompasses the role, for the latter is the author's final goal....[And] while the role does, indeed, have a particular, given shape, it is in no way a limited one but an open one".³⁸ The author, therefore, not only "makes space" for the actor (leaves him free) to interpret the role, but also summons the actor to this "space" of response-ability. For it is the intention of the first-rate playwright that there be nothing mechanical about the actor's representation of his work.⁴⁰

We can even say that the breadth and depth, as well as the distinct mode, of the actor's self-expressive creativity in interpreting the role given him is witness to the generative power of the one who is the self-expressive source of this character/role. Shifting our viewpoint specifically to the author we may phrase it thus: by his own creative activity the dramatic poet calls forth from--indeed, "begets" in--the actor a corresponding creative (as interpretive) act. This implies that the playwright does not posit a "space" for the actor's free role-interpreting only to abandon him there, so to speak. Such is not the nature of the author's act of leaving-free, considered alternatively as a letting-be. If the playwright, in allow the actor "space" for role-interpreting, establishes a distance between himself and the actor, this distance can be (at least partially) accounted for as in function

³⁷ TD 1, 282: "It is not as if the playwright's work is in one place and its presentation is in another: the dramatic work is made present totally and exclusively in the performance."

³⁸ TD 1, 284. [*"für die der Dichter in seinem Werk ausdrücklich und notwendig Raum offenlässt"*, TD I (G.O.), 262.]

of the author's promoting what is unique to the actor, namely, the actor's interpretive creativity. In order to shed some light on the generative efficacy of the author's leaving-free the actor to a creative collaboration, we need recall the dialectic of the author's involvement as both transcendent to and immanent in the other, a dialectic of transcendent/immanent activity that coincides with the distinct mode of auctorial kenosis. While for our purposes we will focus on the immanence of the "pro-creative" influence that the author has upon the actor, we must not lose sight of the transcendent integrity which the author maintains over against the other. Turning first to the author-actor relationship as mediated through the character/role: insofar as the author's creative act remains immanent in the character/role itself as fostering the character's distinct "self-realization" by a kenotic accompaniment "from within",⁴¹ there is a sense in which this auctorial kenosis remains immanently active in relation to the actor summoned to identify himself with the character.⁴² Accordingly, the author's kenotic, fostering accompaniment of the character can be considered as essentially coincident with his kenotic accompaniment of the actor "from within" the latter's interpretive act.⁴³ There is even a sense in which we can say that it is by his originaive kenotic self-surrender in identifying with his character(s) that the playwright calls forth from or engenders in the actor a corresponding kenotic self-surrender in identifying himself with the role/character given him. In other words: the author's creative activity is such that it initiates and sustains a dynamic of mutual kenosis between himself and the actor; and the kenotic mode proper

³⁹ *TD* 1, 279-80.

⁴⁰ See *TD* 1, 284.

⁴¹ See *TD* 1, 271, 274, 280.

⁴² That is, the author in an originaive manner gives himself over in creative activity in and to his character(s), and thereby, in and to the actor. In order to further illuminate the dynamic at play here, it may be helpful to regard it as a metaphorical model for Yahweh's relation to Israel as his covenant partner: in brief, we can consider the character/role to be the covenant partner (both governed and liberated by Yahweh who dwells among them) and the actor to be Israel the nation. Indeed we can cross the threshold into the NT and conceive of the character/role as adoptive sonship in the Beloved and of the actor as the human subject called to such spiritual blessings (see Eph 1:3ff.).

⁴³ Recall *TD* 1, 282: "It is not as if the playwright's work is in one place and its presentation is in another: the dramatic work is made present totally and exclusively in the performance."

to the actor's *interpreting* of the role is an *imaging* of the author's mode of creative work. (We will return to discuss these assertions at greater length below.) Turning next to the more direct author-actor relation, Balthasar explains the auctorial dialectic of transcendent/immanent involvement as follows:

[T]he author will not envisage the actor's and director's work as beginning where he leaves off; rather, he will need it throughout, he will guide and accompany it in its freedom and spontaneity....[T]he author has already placed a particular perspective in the play....In everything it is the author's mind that presses toward embodiment, which means that we must consider all the processes and procedures [of the drama]...within his mind. This mysterious and continuing effect of the author upon his work (which extends to the sphere of the actor and director--not tyrannizing them but providing them with an area for creativity), while it influences each of them profoundly, it actually facilitates, in doing so, their creative activity. The author with his shaping role stands at the beginning of the whole production triad and ensures that it has an effect.⁴⁴

Balthasar's remarks here are pregnant with a further dialectic unique to the author. In affirming that the author will "need" the actor's collaboration throughout, Balthasar is acknowledging a genuine *dependence* of the author on the actor.⁴⁵ Elsewhere he comments: "The playwright's work is *potentially* drama: it only becomes *actual* through the actor....[T]hrough his [the actor's] own reality he causes the idea [the author's creative "word"] to become embodied."⁴⁶ There is, then, a distinctive auctorial dependence that is related to the playwright's self-concealment noted above (that is, the author can only appear on stage in the actor), and thus is likewise initiated by the author in creative freedom. It is a situation of auctorial dependency, therefore, that is fundamentally self-determined. Moreover, the playwright makes himself dependent upon the actor, not only in regard to the latter's presence on stage, but more significantly

⁴⁴ TD 1, 279.

⁴⁵ TD 1, 283: "We can say, indeed, that the poet is dependent on the actor."

⁴⁶ TD 1, 281. Emphasis Balthasar's. Hence "the play designed solely to be read is a peripheral genre"; *ibid.*, 269. These remarks are *not* to be understood as a metaphor for Hegel's doctrine of the self-actualization of the Absolute Subject.

in regard to the actor's free and personal *interpreting* of the character/role. The playwright, as it were, makes request of the actor that the actor dispose of the character/role according to the authentic intent of the playwright.⁴⁷ Hence the author's (freely initiated) dependence on the actor remains inseparable from his primacy in determining or defining the actor's role, such that the author's making request of the actor must be understood at the same time (and indeed primarily) as a making demand of the actor, even as this solicitant demand is mysteriously and immanently engendering of a making creative of the actor in his turn. It follows that both aspects of this auctorial dialectic--a determining of and a depending on the actor's work--are modalities integral to the author's creative involvement with the actor. We may even consider the author-actor relationship as a drama *within* the dramatic production itself.

This "inner" drama becomes clearer and indeed magnified when we focus once again on the author-actor relationship insofar as it entails a dynamic of mutual kenosis. (We will restrict our discussion to the auctorial pole of this dynamic since the counterpart pole can be presented with greater clarity in its own section: see B. *The Actor*.) Because the character is the author's self-expression (otherwise said, is the expression of auctorial creativity), the author, in handing over his character to the actor, delivers over himself (as author). This auctorial "handing over" involves a kind of kenotic self-expropriation on the part of the playwright that serves the actor's creative fulfillment as interpreter. Moreover, the author, in allowing or leaving-free the actor to deem and dispose of the character (to "conceive and execute" the role)⁴⁸ within the "space" of his own interpreting, allows the actor to dispose of the author's creative work--and concomitantly of the author himself.⁴⁹ Thus, by initiating his creative act with its (auctorial) mode of kenotic self-giving, the playwright has established an author-actor relationship in which he exposes himself to

⁴⁷ See *TD* 1, 284.

⁴⁸ *TD* 1, 284: "The actor must conceive and execute his role."

being disposed of by the actor, thereby placing himself “at risk”, so to speak. In this light, we can also speak of an expectancy on the part of the playwright: in his self-giving-over as author he is expectant of (as also dependent on) the actor’s interpretive response to his creative work, through which alone the author’s self-expression can be fully realized. If we permit ourselves another play on words, we would be wrong to consider the author’s expectancy to be such that he holds himself at a purely passive and impotent distance from the actor’s collaboration; rather it must be that the author’s expectancy is pregnant with his immanently active “influence” and “continuing effect” upon the actor and his creative freedom.

Having thus turned the spotlight on the author himself acting “behind the scenes”, we have been able to illuminate something of the author’s unique self-disposing in freely initiating an “inner” drama between himself and the actor: namely, the properly auctorial modalities of kenotic self-dispossession, receptivity, dependency, expectancy, and self-exposure (placing himself “at risk”) in relation to the actor’s interpreting of his role—even as we must equally emphasize that these auctorial dispositions are intrinsic to the author’s generative activity in originally defining and facilitating the actor’s contribution as well as in finally ensuring both it and the play’s accomplishment. Nonetheless, let us admit that Balthasar provides only minimal discussion of the generative nature of these auctorial modalities, particularly with respect to the eliciting of a mirroring disposition in the actor (and, through the latter’s mediating function, in the audience, as will be shown below). Our present treatment already involves an attempt to develop the central points of Balthasar’s exposition of the author-actor relationship in a way that anticipates its relevance precisely for a theological explication of the generative hypostatic mode of divinity that *is* the trinitarian Father—an explication that moves across the spectrum of theological discourse

⁴⁹ Recall Schiller’s statement: “*He* [the dramatic poet] is the work, and the work is *he*.” Cited in *TD* 1, 273.

from metaphorical to analogical predication. We will continue our attempt at such a development throughout this chapter, and indeed throughout our study as a whole.

B. *The Actor*

We have already indicated that the playwright's creative act is such that it not only originates the author-actor relationship but also engenders a dynamic of reciprocal creative activity. In this section it is our intent to discuss the mode of creativity distinctive to the actor precisely inasmuch as it is enacted in correspondence to that of the author, and indeed proves to be a mirroring or imaging of the author's creative act. To this purpose our key concept will be the actor's *interpreting*, for while its meaning includes the element of free creativity, it must yet be distinguished from originaive creativity. Moreover, it entails a creativity which is primarily both receptive and responsive to the author as originator, and which realizes itself in an active correspondence to the author. Finally, the concept of (the actor's) interpreting implies in some sense an imaging or representing of the author's creative activity. As we continue with our discussion, this concept need be kept in mind whenever reference is made to the actor's unique contribution to the dramatic production.

We have seen that there is a dialectic of determining/dependence proper to the author in his relation to the actor: i.e., both a determining (in generative accompaniment) of, and a dependence on, the actor's interpretive response. We have also noted that, for the author, the determining is primary to the dependence, even while the two coincide in the nature of the author's creative activity whose effects include a making creative of the actor in his turn.⁵⁰ If we shift our point of reference to the actor, it becomes evident that the actor's proper dispositions over against the author

⁵⁰ Recall *TD* 1, 279: "[T]he author...will need it [the actor's work] throughout, he will guide and accompany it in its freedom and spontaneity....This mysterious and continuing effect of the author upon his work (which extends to

are such that they, too, entail a dialectic of dependence/determining--but with essential distinctions from that of the author. In the first place, dependence on the author's creative act is primary for the actor, since the actor as such does not posit a role for himself but receives his role as given over to him from the author's initiative of (gratuitous) creativity.⁵¹ Furthermore, the role is received as *impressed* with the definite form or shape determined by the author's self-expression.⁵² Clearly, then, the free creative work of the playwright holds a non-reversible position of primacy in relation to the actor, since it is antecedently determinative of the actor's role.⁵³ At the same time and by the same auctorial activity, the actor receives "an area for creativity", in which area the actor is let-be for his own self-expressive work "in its freedom and spontaneity".⁵⁴ To be sure, the actor's work is genuinely creative:⁵⁵ "for him the drama is not something complete and finished."⁵⁶ But whereas the author's creativity is distinctively originaive and indeed generative (even of the actor's), the actor's proper creativity is essentially *receptive and responsive* to the author's. This mode of receptivity on the part of the actor can be thought of as a (corresponding) "making space" in his own creative work for the playwright's self-expression, as a (reciprocal) letting-be the creative activity of the playwright over against him. Accordingly, because it is the receptivity of the actor

the sphere of the actor and and director...), while it influences them profoundly, it actually facilitates, in doing so, their creative activity."

⁵¹ TD 1, 278: "[T]he actor does not play himself: he acts the role the author has assigned to him in his play."

⁵² See TD 1, 270, 284. Recall once again TD 1, 279: "[T]he author has already placed a particular perspective in the play....In everything it is the author's mind that presses toward embodiment....The author with his shaping role stands at the beginning of the whole production triad." In his section entitled "The Value of Limits", Rollo May remarks: "Form (in which the significance of limits are seen) provides the essential boundaries and structure for the creative act." See R. May, *The Courage to Create*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1975), 117.

⁵³ TD 1, 283: "Since it is the poetic work that is being performed, the author cannot be ejected from his prime position. 'The master of the theatre is the author. The actor can do nothing but instill life into what the author has invented; the director cannot give life to any other play than the one envisaged by the author.'" (Inner citation from Charles Dullin in the Preface to Gouhier's *L'Essence du théâtre*, iv.)

⁵⁴ TD 1, 279.

⁵⁵ TD 1, 284: The actor's "making present" of the drama "is a creative act for which the poet explicitly and necessarily leaves room in his work....The actor, too,...is a free creator." See also TD 1, 279-80.

⁵⁶ TD 1, 284. Balthasar cites G. Simmel, *Logos, International Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur* IX (1920/21), 360. Also: "The author has not said everything about the life of his characters; the actor, keeping within the bounds of consistency...ponders inventively over the text and the event." Cited from André Bonnichon, *La psychologie du comédien* (Mercure de France, 1942), 148; cited by Balthasar in TD 1, 280.

(and not the mode of receptivity proper to the author, which efficaciously evokes and facilitates the actor's), it is of its nature an *obediential* receptivity precisely as it reciprocates and thereby images that of the author. (Let us remark that such an obediential creativity coheres with our key concept of interpretive creativity.)

Even more--and this can no longer be put off--the actor's obediential or interpretive creativity assumes the mode of a kenosis, in relation both to the character/role and therein to the playwright.

The actor, Simmel says, "plunges into the ground of being from which the poet has created his character...in order to fashion it anew, in and through its poetic form, into his work of art....[He traces it back] to its core and unfolds the latent energies of this core....[He] must give the impression of *wanting* to do what, on the basis of the role, he *ought* to do; not as...ready-made, as it were, from the outside, but as when we spontaneously impose the imperative upon ourselves."⁵⁷

Elsewhere Balthasar cites again from Simmel: "There is a primal histrionic attitude, [namely,] playing a part...by pouring one's personal life [the actor's self-expressing] into an (external) form of utterance that is somehow given."⁵⁸ Again we need only step back to see that the actor's kenotic self-giving (which is one with his interpretive act) is in imaging correspondence to the author's own (which is one with his originally creative act). For inasmuch as the form that is given over to the actor is essentially the author's creative self-outpouring, the author is thus first to dispose of himself in a kenotic (if distinctively auctorial) attitude. The author who summons the actor to empty himself into the form of the character (in an interpretive identification with it) does so only as the one who has *first* emptied himself into the character (in an originative, formative identification with it). Or, to put it differently: the creative power of auctorial kenosis requires--even as it facilitates--a reciprocity of kenotic self-surrender in the actor.

⁵⁷ TD 1, 284. Inner citation from G. Simmel, *op. cit.*, 360. Emphasis author's.

⁵⁸ TD 1, 291. Cited from G. Simmel, *op. cit.*, 349.

Closely related to the actor's kenotic mode of interpretive creativity is his disposition of *disponibilité* or availability: "for it is the actor's job to make himself entirely available, body and mind".⁵⁹ "*Disponibilité*: here the whole human system of the actor is made available...to embody the (poetic) [auctorially defined] reality of the role, to 'substantiate' its 'truth'." ⁶⁰ "[T]he actor puts himself and all the powers of his soul, including his emotions, at the service of the work of art, at the service of the part he is to play"⁶¹--at the service, therefore, of the playwright's "word".⁶² Implied here is a kind of self-expropriation--this time on the part of the actor--which serves the *playwright's* fulfillment as creative source, a source who has already dispossessed himself both in putting all his powers at the service of his characters/play and in giving over to the actor the task of interpreting and embodying his poetic self-utterance. It bespeaks, furthermore, a humility and self-concealment proper to the actor; for he does not portray himself, but identifies his self-expressing with the call of representing the other--the author (through the role). As L. Jovet affirms: "How modest you can be...[you who] do not take yourself as the center but as...the means, the filter, the communication wire....Yes, there are actors whose humility and simplicity radiates from every gesture and intonation;...these pure hearts are the true actors."⁶³ Yet even this humility and transparency which are one with the actor's kenotic self-giving are not such that the actor negates himself. Like the playwright, the actor maintains his distinct integrity even as he empties himself in creative activity: "[for] he does not simply abandon his own self; he fills this other reality with

⁵⁹ TD 1, 294.

⁶⁰ TD 1, 288. See also K.S. Stanislavsky, *The Mystery of the Actor's Success* [*Das Geheimnis des schauspielerischen Erfolges* (Zurich and Gallus, Vienna: Scientia, n.d.)], 168, 185.

⁶¹ TD 1, 287. See also TD 1, 285.

⁶² See TD 1, 273. In fact (TD 1, 290): "The actor has to concern himself more with the issue, the poet's idea, than with the character portrayed."

⁶³ Cited in TD 1,294 from L. Jovet, *Témoignages sur le Théâtre* (Flammarion Paris, 1952), 14-15.

his own being”.⁶⁴ “[T]he actor’s dedication to his role is always governed from a center of self-possession.”⁶⁵

At this point let us return to the dialectic between dependence and determining which is intrinsic to the creative work of both actor and author (however differently) in the dramatic production--now with our focus on the aspect of creative determining. Since, for the author, the determining is primary to the dependence, whereas for the actor it is the dependence that is primary, we can succinctly clarify the distinction between author and actor in the context of this dialectic by affirming that the author’s dialectic of determining/dependence is *inverted* to a dependence/determining dialectic in the actor. No doubt this inversion is due to the hierarchical structure of the author-actor relation.⁶⁶ However, we ought not to regard this inversion merely as a static relation of logic, but as a dynamic inter-personal process integral to the mutual creativity between them. As was the case in our foregoing discussion concerning the actor’s receptivity, *kenosis*, *disponibilité*, humility, self-concealment, and so forth, so here too it is the activity of the playwright (in this case, with its inherent dialectic of determining/dependence) that “begets”, as it were, a mirroring dialectic of creativity in the actor. For the sake of clarity, we can consider that each aspect of this dialectic in the playwright engenders its inverse counterpart in the actor. That is, the author’s originaive determining of the characters/play summons the actor to a disposition of dependence in relation to the author’s work; likewise, the author’s originaive dependence on the actor calls forth from the actor a disposition of determining in relation to the same. Inasmuch as the author’s dependence is primarily determinative in relation to the actor, so the actor’s determining is primarily dependent in relation to the author. For in fact, the determining proper to

⁶⁴ *TD* 1, 291.

⁶⁵ *TD* 1, 290.

the actor can only be understood as his (obediential) *interpreting* of the author's creative work (an interpretive determining, therefore, that is essentially an *imaging or representing* of the author's self-expression in his work), and hence is itself dependent upon--being allowed, guided and defined by--the author's originative creative act.

In order to underscore the inner-dramatic nature of the author-actor relationship, as well as to continue highlighting the actor's modalities of creativity as being in imaging reciprocity to those of the author, we can translate the notions "determining" and "dependence" into the terms "disposing of" and "being disposed of", respectively. Thus in virtue of the author's originative kenosis in which his disposing of the character/role (and therein the actor) is one with his surrendering it (and therein himself) to be disposed of by the actor, the actor in his turn is called to an interpretive kenosis in which his being disposed of by the author (his self-surrendering in identifying with his role) is one with his disposing of the role (and therein the author). While we have previously noted that the actor's *disponibilité* (in delivering himself over to be disposed of) is consequent to the author's premier and unique *disponibilité*, we may remark here on further implications. With this mutual *disponibilité* there is connected a reciprocal relationship of self-exposure and expectancy. So that just as the author's expectant *disponibilité* is not to be regarded as an impotent passivity, but as pregnant with his immanently active influence over the actor, so too the actor's "*disponibilité* is not an inactive waiting; it is mobilized by belief in the truth (of the role)".⁶⁷ Moreover, such "belief" by the actor points to a disposing *as deeming or judgment* of the author's self-utterance in his creative work, even while this judgment by the actor of the self-exposed author (in his poetic word) is always antecedently delimited and guided by the latter. "The

⁶⁶ TD 1, 270: "[W]e are only speaking of an ontological primacy of the author over against the actor and director; later, in order to complete the hierarchy, we shall turn to the analogous primacy of the actor vis-à-vis the director, who is the servant of the production."

⁶⁷ TD 1, 289.

actor... must conceive and execute his role [deem and dispose of it] on the basis of a single, unified vision [established by the author]....The actor [is responsible for] the creative effort he makes to enter into and experience the author's vision."⁶⁸ Hence, the deeming or judgment allowed the actor is not determinative of the poetic "truth" or "vision" in the same way as is the author's deeming and judgment as the alpha and the omega of the dramatic production, but is rather--as obediential--a witness to the generative power of the author in its calling forth such creative correspondence in the actor.

Let us conclude this section with the recognition that this author-actor relationship of reciprocal creativity is such that all its modalities (e.g., its inter-determining, inter-dependence, mutual *disponibilité*, mutual kenosis, mutual self-concealment, mutual "making space"/"letting-be", mutual expectancy, mutual receptivity, etc.) are established by the playwright for the sake of a unity of work between himself and the actor ("the two are profoundly one")--a unity which the playwright intends to be ever-greater than his singular activity.⁶⁹

C. *The Director*

"Between the dramatic poet and the actor there yawns a gulf that can be bridged only by a third party who will take responsibility for the play's performance, for making it present here and now."⁷⁰ It is the director's proper creative achievement *to unify* "both the drama (with the author's entire creative contribution) and the art of the actors" (with their creative interpreting of the

⁶⁸ TD 1, 284. Also recall TD 1, 279: "[T]he actor is given not only the 'task' of the role, but also the 'higher task' of entering into the horizon of meaning that encompasses the role, for the latter is the author's final goal." Note that the actor's "entering into" is a kind of (reciprocal) accompaniment of the author.

⁶⁹ TD 1, 283-84: "We can say, indeed, that the poet is dependent on the actor, but the converse is equally true. Their mutual inter-dependence points to the unity of the work it brings about: 'There are not two things, the script (the idea) and the performance; the two are profoundly one'." Inner citation from Hugo Dingler, *Dramaturgie als Wissenschaft* (1904-5), I, 272f.

⁷⁰ TD 1, 298. Balhasar goes on to remark that, while "there is nothing against the author himself...or a particular actor" from taking on this role, yet "in the normal theatrical organization this mediating role has to be exercised by a distinct person".

characters/roles).⁷¹ Direction, then, can be understood as an intermediating power “which has to keep to the ‘hierarchy’ of antecedent powers”.⁷² This implies, moreover, that the task of the director is “most profoundly dependent on” the two creative elements (author and actor) it has to integrate.⁷³ In fact, we can speak of an obediential creativity distinctive to the director which is primarily related to the author’s work: “‘Without doubt, the first commandment for the director is obedience to the text’, which as such is the ‘primary’ element (though not the only one) in the performance.”⁷⁴ Like that of the actor, the director’s obediential creativity entails a kenotic “penetrating of the dramatist’s mind and heart” in order to serve the making-present of the author’s “truth” in the actual stage performance.⁷⁵ Indeed, it is precisely in light of this auctorial “truth” that the director must guide the actor’s representation of his role/character, all the while acknowledging that the actor, on his side, “can also claim primacy over him” inasmuch as the text has been handed over to the actor “not as something already complete” but as requiring that “the actor’s imagination and creativity [be] freely integrated with it”.⁷⁶ Thus the director must identify himself with both the creative spirit of the author and that of the actor, moving from a rootedness in the author’s original dramatic intent to an “eliciting” and “awakening of the actor’s creative energies”--and back again.⁷⁷ The unity that gradually emerges from this mediation of reciprocal communication, to be sure, “corresponds to the poet’s idea, but in concrete terms is due to the director”.⁷⁸ Accordingly, in view of such a (twofold) kenotic self-expropriation, we can speak of a directorial receptivity and letting-be in relation to the creative activity of both author and actor: “The director must let himself

⁷¹ *TD* 1, 298.

⁷² *TD* 1, 299. Also *TD* 1, 298, n.1: “It will suffice to use the term ‘director’ for the role of mediation between the dramatic text [and therein the playwright] and the actors.”

⁷³ *TD* 1, 298.

⁷⁴ *TD* 1, 299. Inner citation from Gaston Baty, in *Revue critique des idées et des livres* (Aug. 25, 1923), 479.

⁷⁵ *TD* 1, 299.

⁷⁶ *TD* 1, 299. Also on the same page: “[T]he text is not something fixed and finished but something that needs to be understood and interpreted in a living and spiritual manner.”

⁷⁷ *TD* 1, 300.

be led; he should not want anything of the play [for himself]. He should annihilate himself, be a perfectly receptive vessel.”⁷⁹ The director’s disposing of the author’s and the actor’s work as their unifying intermediary is one with his (primary) attitude of allowing himself to be disposed of by their respective creative efforts. Hence we can also speak of the humility and self-concealment proper to the director’s contribution to the dramatic production. “As a figure he must disappear, as it were, in order to be a medium and an atmosphere present to all.”⁸⁰ Balthasar will even assert: “When it comes to the final result, the première, the director has done his duty and can go, leaving the actors behind and, through their play, the author.”⁸¹

D. *The Audience*

But what of the final result? Does it remain a self-enclosed communication between author, actor, and director? According to Roman Ingarden, “drama is the only poetic form that does not attain its full aesthetic unfolding in poetic medium itself, for the dramatic word is tied to public performance”.⁸² We will consider the nature of this dramatic word in relation to the audience before going on to discuss the significance of the bond between the threefold dramatic creation and its public performance.

We have already indicated that “the actor allows something else to shine through him”;⁸³ namely, the author’s self-expression. The actor does so by turning toward the author, so to speak, in the twofold disposition of receptive *disponibilité* (being disposed of by the author’s work) and

⁷⁸ TD 1, 301.

⁷⁹ TD 1, 300. Balthasar is citing Ionesco, *Notes et contre-notes* (1966), 262.

⁸⁰ TD 1, 301. In TD 1, 299, n.4, Balthasar cites reports on the director Brecht whose “direction was far more discreet than that of the famous directors. Those who saw him did not feel that he wanted to put over ‘something he had in mind’....When he intervened, it was ‘the way the wind was blowing’ and so was practically unnoticeable.” From *Schriften 2, Theater 2*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (1967), vol. 16: 759-60. On p. 300 (TD 1) Balthasar laments: “It is a sad fact that in this century there are star directors who have forgotten their function of simply mediating and eliciting.”

⁸¹ TD 1, 301. Also TD 1, 300: “The director should devote his energies to rendering himself superfluous.”

⁸² TD 1, 306, n. 4. Balthasar cites from Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (1931), 329.

⁸³ TD 1, 307. See also TD 1, 294.

obediential interpretive creativity (disposing of the author's work). At the same time, in his act of performing, the actor turns toward the public in order to serve as the mediator between author and audience.⁸⁴ There is a sense in which we can consider the actor as being sent from the author to the audience, bearing the responsibility of communicating the author's poetic "truth" or "word" through his own interpretive performance. Indeed, in and through the actor's stage performance a "revelation" takes place⁸⁵ in which the audience recognizes "that the poet's *Logos* has become incarnated".⁸⁶ Such a revelation or epiphany, however, does not present itself as a self-absorbed poetic beatitude oblivious to the human condition of its audience with its needs. Rather, in order for the poet's word to be recognized *as Logos*, such an epiphany presupposes that the poet has initiated a real communication with the audience precisely by entering into its human experience and addressing it.⁸⁷ On the side of the author, this means that his creative activity *for* an other extends beyond the characters and the actors to the audience itself. What does the playwright offer *as for* the public? Since the public comes to the theatre with the hope of "beholding...[and] learning something about beginnings and endings",⁸⁸ the creative responsibility to the public lies ultimately with the playwright inasmuch as he is the alpha and the omega of the dramatic production (see A.1. above). From his "transcendent" poetic horizon, the author creates a dramatic (epiphanic) work that "gives meaning" both to the personal identity of each member of the audience and "to the [broader but] limited horizon of everyday life".⁸⁹ Accordingly, through its on-

⁸⁴ *TD* 1, 285: "In this task of embodying [the author's work for the audience], the actor is a mediator."

⁸⁵ See *TD* 1, 262, 307.

⁸⁶ *TD* 1, 311. And *TD* 1, 308: "Here, according to Hölderlin, if the poet's word achieves incarnation, the myth can rise again as the word of God, which takes place bodily in the face of the watching crowd."

⁸⁷ *TD* 1, 268: "[T]his creativity only has meaning and a basis within a larger spiritual context: the performance takes place for the benefit of an audience." Additionally, *TD* 1, 279: "The author...stands at the beginning of the whole production triad and ensures that it has an effect, beyond itself, on the audience; that audience which the author has envisaged right from the start and with whom, over the heads of the actor and the director, he has established an understanding."

⁸⁸ *TD* 1, 308.

⁸⁹ *TD* 1, 308.

stage performance, the author's work can awaken the spectator to the call of being an actor, in his turn, "in the play of existence".⁹⁰ Nevertheless, given all that the author offers on behalf of the audience (e.g., poetic meaning, justice, resolution, etc.), in the end we must recognize that this auctorial beneficence has its origin in his free initiative of creativity and coincides with his own self-expression as author. In other words, all that the author does "for us" through his dramatic work remains a free disclosure of "who the Author is".⁹¹

Turning now to the nature and significance of the bond between the threefold dramatic creation and its public performance, we need assert directly that the bond is not restricted to a unilateral communication from stage to audience. The (threefold) dramatic work establishes a reciprocal relationship between itself and its spectators. Indeed, this mutual relationship proves to be an extension of the modalities and dispositions which constituted the inner-dramatic situation between the creative elements of author, actor, and director--now, however, it is the latter over against the audience. To begin with, while the triad of dramatic creativity freely determines what is played before the spectators, at the same time it places itself in dependence on them. Certainly the dramatic work requires a public performance--"entering time as an event"--as the only context within which it fully manifests itself.⁹² In addition, "there must always be a '*communion*' between what happens on the stage and the audience *if the play is to succeed*".⁹³ This communion can be understood as a mutual being-for. We have seen that the author acts *for* the audience; but in acting thus the author, through his dramatic word, makes request of the audience that it correspond on its part by being *for* the performance of his poetic "truth". Similarly the actor, in his role as mediator

⁹⁰ TD 1, 308-9: "For the action is on behalf of the audience: it must lend meaning to the activities of the human being....As the action proceeds, man realizes his two inseparable functions, that is, being both a spectator and an actor in the play of existence."

⁹¹ Recall Balthasar's reference to Newman (in TD 2, 11) with which we opened this chapter.

⁹² TD 1, 301.

⁹³ TD 1, 306. Emphasis mine. See also H. Gouhier, "De la communion au théâtre" in *Théâtre et collectivité*, ed. A. Villiers (Paris, 1953).

for the audience, “is dependent on the feedback *from* the audience”⁹⁴ inasmuch as “he needs the cooperation of the audience [in] allow[ing] his representation to be valid”.⁹⁵ The actor exerts himself to win over the audience that they be *for* his interpretation of the role (the “true actor” does so not so as to gain glory for himself, but in order to be confirmed that he has accomplished the necessary transparency to the author’s poetic vision...to the glory of the playwright). In effect, the triad of dramatic creativity offers itself in openness to the audience⁹⁶ and leaves-free the audience within its own proper “space” of responsiveness. Moreover, the nature of the audience’s response to which the threefold dramatic creativity has exposed itself is by no means a mere token gesture. For in its free self-manifestation the triad of dramatic creativity surrenders itself to be deemed and disposed of by those before whom it is offered. “*Un jugement d’existence*: that is the spectator’s part in...the dramatic performance.”⁹⁷ The “critical attitude” that is integral to the audience’s cooperation with the performance can “put the author’s and actor’s work on the scales”; the audience can, in fact, “refuse wholly or partially to go along with it”.⁹⁸

At this point we need clarify how it is that such critical assessing coincides with the audience’s cooperation with the dramatic work (let us recall that the audience is allowed its “space” of response-ability in relation to the stage performance for the sake of a “communion” with it). As we have already indicated, the public comes to the theatre *for* something: in order to find in the performance “something that transcends and gives meaning to the limited horizon of everyday

⁹⁴ TD 1, 307. Emphasis mine. Also TD 1, 285: “In this task of embodying, the actor is a mediator. He does not act for himself, but for the audience, on whom he is dependent in a new and different way [from his dependence on the author].” Insofar as the director’s task is to serve the “making-present” of the play in the public performance, the director’s creativity for its part is inherently *for* the audience; see TD 1, 298, 306.

⁹⁵ TD 1, 285.

⁹⁶ TD 1, 306, n. 4: Balthasar cites H.-G. Gadamer: “The play’s openness to the spectator...is part and parcel of its concentrated form”; in *Wahrheit und Methode* (1965), 104.

⁹⁷ TD 1, 285. Balthasar cites from H. Gouhier, *Le théâtre et l’existence* (Aubier, 1952), 25.

⁹⁸ TD 1, 309.

life”.⁹⁹ In so doing the audience looks to the actor for the “revelation” of this transcendent meaning,¹⁰⁰ the incarnation of “the poet’s *Logos*”.¹⁰¹ But just as the actor must “enter into and experience” his role according to the author’s mind in order to authentically embody the poetic word,¹⁰² in its turn the audience must “make the effort of entering into the action” in order to critically assess this same word.¹⁰³ This implies, first of all, that the audience must not look to the actor “from an uninvolved vantage point”; hence its deeming and disposing of the dramatic work excludes any “neutral observation”.¹⁰⁴ Secondly, while its disposition over against the stage presentation is primarily receptive, the audience “is not passive--quite the reverse; if the performance is to succeed, it must be active”. It follows, therefore, that its receptivity is of its nature an active and kenotic *disponibilité*: the audience “must be active, with a willingness to enter into”¹⁰⁵--indeed, to surrender itself in “unreserved involvement” to--the dramatic action that encounters it.¹⁰⁶ It must make itself utterly available to the drama, allowing itself to be “transported”, “carried away”¹⁰⁷--“even ‘where you do not wish to go’, into areas that are painful, disturbing and possibly unbearable”.¹⁰⁸ The threefold dramatic work summons the audience to an

⁹⁹ TD 1, 308. See also TD 1, 310.

¹⁰⁰ TD 1, 307: “[T]he actor allows something else to shine through him. For its part the audience looks for the manifestation of this something else *through* the actor. It is not merely a display of dramatic art...but, in and through the performance, a ‘revelation’ takes place. Audience and actors are not complementary halves; both of them remain open, expecting some third thing that is to come about in and through both the players and the audience.” This “third thing” is the poet’s final (and often redemptive) resolution that comes about at the “*kairos*” determined by the author; see TD 1, 306.

¹⁰¹ TD 1, 311.

¹⁰² TD 1, 284. See also TD 1, 279, 280, 291.

¹⁰³ TD 1, 309.

¹⁰⁴ TD 1, 309.

¹⁰⁵ TD 1, 306. As was true for the actor, so here the audience’s *disponibilité* entails an expectancy that is inherently active as a modality of self-disposing. The audience offers itself (responsively, not as the initiator) in an “open readiness” that “has certain expectations. It expects to be led ‘into the open’” toward the transcendent meaning that proceeds from the author’s creativity (TD 1, 309-10).

¹⁰⁶ TD 1, 308-9. Also TD 1, 306: “The relationship can also be expressed (with Jean Louis Barrault) in erotic terms: ‘An act takes place between the stage and the auditorium that is symbolized by the sexual act, that is, by the yearning and the self-communication of love’.” Inner citation is from Barrault’s *Le théâtre dans le monde*, 30.

¹⁰⁷ TD 1, 310.

¹⁰⁸ TD 1, 309.

obediential participation in the unfolding course of the drama itself, even as each member of the audience is let-be in its freedom to either assent to or refuse such involvement.

Let us conclude by highlighting “the drama within the drama” that takes place between the stage and the audience: it is the triad of dramatic creativity that takes the initiative in delivering itself over to the critical assessment or judgment of the audience, thereby establishing a relationship that requires an assenting cooperation from the audience if the play is to succeed as “communion”. Indeed, it is only because of this triadic self-delivering-over that the audience, in its act of (responsive) judging, can be moved by the “revelation” communicated in the performance to deliver itself over in return to the final judgment that belongs to the author--his poetic “solution” and “justice”.¹⁰⁹ In view of this we can also speak of a mutual accompaniment: for inasmuch as the author, through his poetic *Logos* rendered “incarnate” by the actor, has first descended to accompany the audience in the conditions of its human existence, he calls forth from the audience a reciprocal accompaniment of his poetic leading “to the end” of the drama.

E. *From Theatre to Theology*

We began this chapter by remarking on Newman’s conception of Christianity as “a supernatural story, practically a stage play” in which “who the *Author* is” is revealed by “what *he* has done”.¹¹⁰ Through the foregoing explication of the threefold elements of dramatic creativity (with particular attention given to the author-actor relationship) we have attempted a preliminary answer to the questions as to why the primary focus is on the author and his activity, and how it is that the author, precisely in respect of his distinctive auctorial activity, is revealed in the activity of the actor. In the process we have constructed a definite profile of the auctorial mode of creativity

¹⁰⁹ Although in *TD* 1, 289, Balthasar is referring to the actor being “mobilized by belief in the truth (of the role)”, still his discussion of the dynamic underlying the audience’s “*jugement d’existence*” (*TD* 1, 285) justifies its application here. See also *TD* 1, 306-10.

according to Balthasar's specifications. We need move now beyond the sphere of this strictly theatrical model and enter that of Christian theology proper, in order with Balthasar to approach the revelation of the trinitarian Father via a *theo*-dramatic theory.

Before so embarking, it remains for us to underline the metaphorical function of the dramatic categories and modes of expression which we have gathered above. These materials will prove useful for theological discourse only insofar as we realize in employing them that they must be transcended by the form and content, categories and modes of expression, of divine revelation itself. As Balthasar firmly asserts:

the author's "transcendence" vis-à-vis the play as performed is only a poor metaphor for the part played by God. It is no less inadequate to compare the God-man with the play's hero and the divine Spirit with the director. In theo-drama, furthermore, man is startled out of his spectator's seat and dragged onto the "stage"....The raising of the many-sided intramundane drama to the level of theo-drama, which is essentially transcendent and unique, puts a question mark over even the most interesting dramatic categories, a question mark that must apply, ultimately, to every attempt to present this unique reality in the forms of speech.¹¹¹

Albeit bearing an ineradicable question mark, the model of the elements of dramatic production can yet serve as a metaphorical context through which to illuminate the dramatic character of the Christian mysteries--specifically, that of the economic Trinity in its salvific action for us.¹¹² Of course, such an assertion remains to be demonstrated by our study taken in its entirety. Even now, however, we can acknowledge that what we selected for explication in regard to the creativity of author-actor-director (as well as the "role" of the audience), while valid within the profane field of

¹¹⁰ TD 2, 11. Emphasis mine. See J.H. Newman, "The Tamworth Reading Room" (1841), in *Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects* (1872), 296.

¹¹¹ TD 2, 17. As G.F. O'Hanlon points out: "Whether we use clearly pictorial language or more exact and properly analogic terminology we still always move within a universe of discourse that is non-univocal"; in *The Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 115.

¹¹² TD 3, 532: "The triad of dramatic creativity (author, actor, director)...gave us a perfect metaphor for the economic Trinity in the theo-drama."

dramatics, was simultaneously governed by the transcendent context of biblical revelation.¹¹³ That is to say, the categories and notions were taken up and employed “from below” precisely insofar as a Christian hermeneutics “from above” could assimilate them into a properly theodramatic theory--analogous to the manner in which the Bible, which never made concessions to alien forms of religion when the latter were not assimilable by the self-revelation of the living God, yet moved (with its perspective “from above”) to assimilate some of these forms into its own (inspired) articulation of faith.¹¹⁴ Consequently, Balthasar need not to be suspected of illegitimately force-fitting dramatic categories onto the trinitarian God. More justified perhaps will be the reverse objection: that he is “tainting” the analysis of secular dramatics with Christian theology. I, in fact, am more vulnerable to this objection inasmuch as I have chosen to utilize the notion of a “generative” creativity in regard to the dramatic poet in anticipation of Balthasar’s theological elucidation of the God and the Father of Jesus Christ. That is, my articulation of Balthasar’s analysis of the nature of auctorial creativity has already envisaged the transfer of a term such as “to generate” (a role, for example) from a metaphorical to a properly analogical mode of signification when applied to the mystery of the Trinitarian Father. In any case, these matters must “play themselves out”, as it were, in the course of our study.

For the present, let us begin traversing the way from theatre to theology by entering into an extensive discussion of Balthasar’s theodramatic Christology. As we proceed, let us keep in mind our twofold aim: on the one hand, to establish foundations for a doctrine of the immanent Trinity

¹¹³ *TD* 2, 9: “Thus our reflections are themselves *based on* this revelation: they do not merely seek it. This is immediately evident from the fact that our view of God, the world and man will not be developed primarily from below, out of man’s ‘understanding of himself’ [still less out of his understanding of the theatre]: it will be drawn from that drama which God has already ‘staged’ with the world and with man”--a salvific drama that “can never ultimately be enacted on any other stage but that of the Trinity” (*TD* 2, 88). Emphasis Balthasar’s.

¹¹⁴ See “Bewegung zu Gott”, in *Spiritus Creator: Skizzen Zur Theologie* III (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1967), 42-9. The entire content of the essay “Bewegung zu Gott” also appears as the opening chapter to volume V of *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, edited by Johannes Feiner and Magnus Löhrer (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1967).

and of the Father as its living Source, and on the other hand, to confirm the metaphorical potential of the foregoing analysis of the author-actor model when used in the service of Christian revelation.

II

Theodramatic Christology and the Revelation of the Trinitarian Father

A theological doctrine of God that did not develop directly from the economy of Jesus Christ would fail to present the full dimensions of the three-personed activity of the one Godhead. For the God of triune activity manifests himself in definitive fullness only on the stage of world history and in the unique event of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.¹¹⁵ In theodramatic terms, the Father-Author, the Son-Actor, and the Spirit-Director--as the three hypostatically distinct modes of divine activity--will answer the question as to who they are only in the context of the dramatic action itself.¹¹⁶ This is not to say that the three personal modes of divine activity only emerge through the economic action; nor even that God eternally and immanently constitutes himself as these distinct hypostatic modes *because of* his free decision to so reveal and involve himself economically (to which interpretation Karl Barth's trinitarian theology is susceptible).¹¹⁷ It remains

¹¹⁵ See *TD* 2, 196; *TD* 4, 319; *GL* 7, 107, 318; and *Payer*, 154. This is clearly affirmed by the *International Theological Commission*, in its 1981 document "Theology, Christology, Anthropology", I, C, 1, p. 211: "The economy of Jesus Christ reveals the triune God." And *ibid.*, 2.1, p. 211: "The mystery of Jesus Christ belongs to the structure of the Trinity."

¹¹⁶ *TD* 2, 11: "Only the action itself will reveal who each individual is....Christianity...tells us who the Father-Author is by telling us what he has done." According to Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) in his book *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrez Potocki, *Analecta Husserliana*, vol. X (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979): "[A]ction constitutes the specific moment whereby the person is revealed. Action gives the best insight into the inherent essence of the person and allows us to understand the person most fully."

¹¹⁷ See *TD* 2, 194. For a brief discussion of this problematic aspect of Karl Barth's trinitarian theology, see William Hill's *The Three-Personed God* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 121.

true, however, that the horizontal course of God's dramatic salvific action "can and must raise profound vertical questions: Who is this God...?"¹¹⁸ Who is this God, who appears *as God* (with the integrity of his eternal and inner-divine Being) precisely in his tri-personal activity for us?

Let us therefore commence with God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, a revelation which is "necessarily given in the midst of [God's] economic salvific action and not apart from it".¹¹⁹ Concomitantly, then, we commence with the principle which Balthasar seeks to establish in his theodramatic theory: namely, that the participants in theo-drama "can only be defined on the basis of the action"--which means that Balthasar will approach the mystery of the immanent (or inner-divine) Trinity by means of a theodramatic Christology that precludes the claim "to have prior knowledge of Jesus' essential nature as the Incarnate Word before the action begins".¹²⁰

A. *The identity of mission and Person in Jesus Christ*

There is only a single case in the theatre of the world where actor/person and role/mission absolutely coincide: in the drama of the God-man, Jesus Christ.¹²¹ If we turn to Jesus' historical self-disposing we find that he "dedicates his whole self to his mission; he is entirely one with it. He *is* the 'one sent'".¹²² In his self-giving, and hence in the manifestation of his self-consciousness, Jesus shows himself to be the one whose "I" "coincides with the mission he has received from

¹¹⁸ *TD* 2, 195.

¹¹⁹ *LA*, 72, n.2. Also *TD* 2, 91.

¹²⁰ *TD* 3, 13-14. Later, in *TD* 3, 508, Balthasar specifies "the principle [which] we have been setting forth in this book, namely, that theological persons cannot be defined in isolation from their dramatic action".

¹²¹ See *TD* 1, 646; *TD* 2, 13; *TD* 3, 533. In each instance Balthasar cites Theodore Haecker, *Was ist der Mensch?* 2d ed. (Hegner, Leipzig, 1934), 128f.

¹²² *TD* 3, 166. Emphasis mine. In addition, *TD* 3, 150: "[W]hile in the case of the prophets, their being (or person) and function are--at least relatively--distinguishable, here we are presented with Someone who never was, and never could have been, anyone other than the One Sent [*der je schon Gesendete*]." *ITC*, "Theology, Christology, Anthropology", (1981), II, A, 2, p. 217: "The unique mission of the Son (see Mk 12:1-12) is inseparable from the Person of Jesus Christ." See also J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster (New York: Seabury, 1979), 149-50, henceforth, *Intro.*; and W. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, transl. V. Green (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 253, henceforth *JC*.

God”.¹²³ Otherwise said, “Jesus experiences his human consciousness entirely in terms of mission”;¹²⁴ in him there is an absolute “identity of his mission-consciousness and I-consciousness”.¹²⁵ Inasmuch, then, as this “role” or mission is so “fused with the person” as to be “identical with him”, it is a role that cannot be exchanged for any other dramatic part without requiring a concomitant exchange of the actor’s “I”.¹²⁶ Moreover, if it is true that “Jesus’ sense of mission coincides with his self-consciousness”, there was never a moment when his sense of (precisely *this*) mission was not present “(however implicitly) ever since he had understood himself as a human being”.¹²⁷

B. *The divine and eternal nature of Jesus’ mission and Person*

Now since “Christ’s mission...is identical with the acting Person”,¹²⁸ we may ask after the nature of his mission in order to arrive at the nature of his Person: “Who *must* he be, to behave and act in this way?”¹²⁹ Who must the actor be to accomplish such a role? We are thus pursuing a Christology “from below” in inquiring after the conditions for the possibility of what took place in him, since Christ’s “overt *function*” presupposes his “covert *being*”. Accordingly, we need allow

¹²³ TD 3, 509. Also, TD 3, 153: “Thus Jesus’ knowledge of himself coincides with his knowledge of his being sent (Jn 5:36; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:8,21,23,25).” See ITC, “The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission” (1985), 2.3., p. 310.

¹²⁴ TD 3, 224. “For it is precisely from his mission that Jesus knows himself to be who he is, the Son of the Father, different from other human beings. At all events his mission is the personalizing element”; TD 3, 509. See also TD 3, 51, 458, 522.

¹²⁵ TD 3, 230. In addition, TD 3, 505: “We defined his [Christ’s] person in ontological terms: his conscious subject is identical with his divine mission.”

¹²⁶ TD 3, 150.

¹²⁷ TD 3, 175. Elsewhere Balthasar affirms (TD3, 196): “Jesus’ consciousness of Sonship is qualitative and has no conceivable beginning, but it remains inseparable from his mission-consciousness.” See TD 3, 173.

¹²⁸ TD 3, 258.

¹²⁹ TD 3, 149: “As Cullmann rightly says, ‘When, in the New Testament, the question is asked, ‘Who is Christ?’, it never means (or not primarily), ‘What is his nature?’ but, first and foremost, ‘What is his function?’ The various answers given are always concerned with both his person *and* his work.’ More precisely, the question of his work implies the question of his person: Who *must* he be, to behave and act in this way? If we stay with this question, we shall begin to ascend the path that leads from Christ’s overt *function* to his covert *being* (which the former presupposes).” The inner citation is from O. Cullmann’s *Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1957), 4. [E.T.: *The Christology of the New Testament*, transl. S.C. Guthrie and C.A.M. Hall (Philadelphia:

for the possibility that the answer as to the identity of the acting Person may eventually come from a Christology “from above”.¹³⁰

Through his preaching, Jesus articulated what he understood to be the nature of his mission or “role”. His preaching can be summarized in his announcement of the kingdom of God: “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God...for I was sent for this purpose” (Lk 4:43; cf. Mk 1:15; Mt 4:17).¹³¹ Indeed, Jesus identifies his being sent (or his coming) in mission with the arrival of the kingdom.

The notion of “sending” is closely associated with expressions to do with “coming”, which Jesus alone uses in a solemn sense. Where Luke says, “I was sent for this purpose” (Lk 4:43), Mark says, “that is why I came out” (1:38)--whether this mysterious phrase refers to his coming from the Father or not. References to his “having come” always manifest the Messianic awareness of bringing about, in his own person, an ultimate saving event [the kingdom].¹³²

Thus we have Jesus’ claim that, by virtue of his appearing on the stage of world history, the kingdom of God is already “in the midst of you” (Lk 17:21) and has “come upon you” (Mt 12:28; Mk 2:19).

In him, the final, unsurpassable reality is there, more than the prophets (Jonah), more than wisdom (Solomon); hence: “Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Mt 13:16f.)....The presence of the Bridegroom is a time of celebration when no one can fast (Mk 2:19). Jesus has seen Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Lk 10:18); the “strong man” has already been bound by the “stronger” (Mt 12:29). Jesus proclaims himself in Nazareth as the bringer of salvation who is to come at the end of time (Lk 4:21: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”), and he confirms the same message to the Baptist, who inquires about him from prison (Mt

Westminster Press, 1959)]. In addition, see J. Ratzinger, *Intro.*, 150-51; W. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 171, henceforth, *GJC*; and Wm. Hill, *op. cit.*, 9, 16-17.

¹³⁰ *TD* 3, 150.

¹³¹ See *TD* 3, 43.

¹³² *TD* 3, 152. Concerning this passage, Balthasar remarks that “even when someone else is spoken of as ‘having come’, it implies a certain preexistence: ‘For John came...’ (Mt 11:18; Lk 7:33), i.e., according to prophecy, where he already preexisted in the form of Elijah (Mt 17:12; see Mk 9:13). But John himself knows that he is a provisional phenomenon leading to the One who ‘comes’ *absolutely*: ‘Are you he who is to come?’ (Mt 11:3 par, see Mk 1:7; Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16). All the promises refer to the One who is to come, who thus preexists them in a certain respect.” See *ITC*, “The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission” (1985), 2.2., p. 310.

11:2-6). His healing activity and, even more so, his forgiving of sins (assuming he did) are signs that the final age has begun.¹³³

Jesus' mission-consciousness evidences a unique eschatological dimension that is rooted in the very core of his self-consciousness: he speaks and acts as the one who bears the eschatological accomplishment of the kingdom *in* himself, as integral to his mission.¹³⁴ Indeed, according to Balthasar, "if we could put into words Jesus' fundamental intuition concerning his identity, it would be: 'I am the one who must accomplish this task.' 'I am the one through whom the kingdom of God must and will come.'"¹³⁵ Transposed to theodramatic terms: Jesus understands himself to be "the consummating protagonist" of the entire drama as it proceeds from the author's creative activity and intent.¹³⁶ Conscious that the kingdom of God coincides with his mission from the Father (which mission is itself one with his Person), Jesus is aware that the kingdom, while having commenced with his arrival (as the one who has come or has been sent), is yet "in process of coming": for being essentially connected with his "existence-in-mission", its consummation can only coincide with the accomplishment of his entire destiny.¹³⁷

Inasmuch as the nature of Jesus' mission is eschatological, it is also universal; his unique mission not only "brings him, within the span of his own life and death, to the end of the world", but in virtue of its *pro nobis* dimension, it is the locus in which *all* things are fulfilled in the

¹³³ TD 3, 97. In addition, TD 3, 27: "Anyone who surrenders his life for his sake will gain it (Mt 10:39). In the Old Covenant, Yahweh had promised 'rest for your souls' (Jer 6:16); now, in the New, Jesus promises it, in his own presence, to all who are heavy laden (Mt 11:29). Every man's final destiny will be determined by his attitude to Jesus (Mk 8:38)...While everything in the world is transitory, the man who builds on Jesus' words builds his house on an unshakeable foundation (Mt 7:24). For 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away' (Mk 13:31)...In virtue of his mission, he puts himself at the center like a magnet, 'drawing all to himself'...(Jn 12:32)." See also TD 3, 116, 161. See ITC, "The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission", (1985), 1.2., p. 309.

¹³⁴ TD 3, 160: "We must bear in mind that the earthly Jesus was aware of his eschatological and universal mission. The Messianic sound of his 'I'-utterances, the absolute sense of mission expressed in his calls to discipleship", and so forth. See the entire section TD 3, 160-82; and W. Kasper, *GJC*, 171.

¹³⁵ TD 3, 166. See TD 3, 44.

¹³⁶ TD 3, 21.

kingdom of God.¹³⁷ Now precisely because of his mission's "pro-structure" (its "being-for" the many: Mk 10:45; 14:24; and par., also Jn 6:51)¹³⁸ we must hold that Jesus "was adequately aware of its universality";¹⁴⁰ otherwise, says Balthasar, not having assumed responsibility for the world's salvation he cannot be credited as responsible for its accomplishment--neither by God nor by his disciples.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, the fact that Jesus is conscious of the eschatological and universal nature of his mission implies that he is "conscious...of the *divinity* of his 'I'".¹⁴² For "the bearer of such responsibility in this subject can be none other than a divine Person. Only a divine Person can measure up to 'God's cause' and be God's 'agent' on the earth."¹⁴³ In specifically theodramatic terms: the acting Person who is Jesus Christ must be such as can play a "role" that requires a descent "into the abyss of all that is tragic--far beyond the ability of any tragic hero"--precisely thereby to redeem all humanity and to open for them access to the Father in the Spirit. Such a salvific "performance" with its universal "overstretching of his Person" presupposes that both role

¹³⁷ TD 3, 166. See TD 3, 43, 110-11; and 157 for Balthasar's use of the term "existence-in-mission" in regard to Christ. See also ITC, "Select Questions of Christology" (1979), IV, B, 2.1., p. 197; 2.4., p. 198; "The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission" (1985), p. 309; and Wm. Hill, *op. cit.*, 6-7.

¹³⁸ See TD 3, 113; and ITC, "Select Questions of Christology" (1979), IV, B, 2.3., p. 197.

¹³⁹ See Balthasar's discussion of Christ's role of "representation" in TD 3, 113-16.

¹⁴⁰ TD 3, 166. See also TD 3, 160, 164, 167. See ITC, "The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission" (1985), p. 309.

¹⁴¹ TD 3, 164: "Nor can we say that the Jesus who appeared after Easter had a totally different consciousness from the earthly Jesus; he acts and is the same. 'In that case, in a mysterious but real way, when he dies he must know *for whom* he is giving up his life, otherwise we cannot say that it is *he* who saves us...' It is impossible to suppose that God could use his death to reconcile the world to himself if the one who died it was unaware of its significance." The inner citation is from J. Guillet, "Jésus avant Pâques" in *Les Quatre fleuves* 4 (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 37. Also, TD 3, 27: "Whether explicitly or implicitly, Jesus must have acted as if he were the Archimedean point of the religious history of the world, otherwise it would have been impossible for a theology like the pre-Pauline and Pauline to have developed in so short a time." See ITC, "Select Questions of Christology" (1979), IV, B, 2.2., p. 197.

¹⁴² TD 3, 233: "Jesus is conscious of a universal mission and of the divinity of his 'I' that this implies." In addition, TD 3, 166: "Here, by way of anticipation, we can say that Jesus is aware of an element of the divine in his innermost, indivisible self-consciousness; it is intuitive insofar as it is inseparable from the intuition of his mission-consciousness...[a mission, to be sure, that is] more than human--to reconcile the whole world to God."

¹⁴³ TD 3, 510. And *ibid.*: "[T]he Fathers reached this conclusion primarily for soteriological reasons: no mere man, even were he to have the most awesome mission laid upon him, can 'take away the sin of the world'. This needs a divine Person who has freely entered into a conscious subject and is thus able to share solidarity with all other (sinful) conscious subjects; indeed, he *must* manifest this solidarity if he is to carry their burden." Emphasis Balthasar's. Elsewhere, TD 3, 239-40: "[A]nthropologically this is not possible if it is simply *some man or other* who suffers on others' behalf: it is only possible if '*unus ex Trinitate passus est*' both in his human nature and in his divine person. For

and actor are “absolute, that is, divine”.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, since the measure of Jesus’ mission coincides with God’s *eternal* purpose and decree for creation, and if his mission is one with his Person, then “he is the One who, from before all time, has had the task--indeed, he *is* the task--of fulfilling this universal design”.¹⁴⁵ More precisely, the One who is sent, whose “I” perfectly identifies with the eschatological activity of the One who sends, “must be God also”,¹⁴⁶ and indeed, must be “conscious of having been always ‘with’ God”, cooperating from eternity in the work of creation (Jn 1:1-3; 1Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2f.).¹⁴⁷ For Balthasar, insofar as the mission of Jesus demonstrates his conscious self-disposing as the one who has always given himself in absolute responsibility for the full implementation of God’s eternal plan for the world, Jesus is conscious that his Person is as divine and eternal as that of the Creator-Father who sends him.¹⁴⁸

C. In his “personal mode” as Son, Jesus reveals God as Trinity

Now intrinsic to the above is the revelatory truth that the unique mission of Jesus (absolutely singular because it encompasses the eschatological “all” of God’s “cause”) manifests his Person to be divine and eternal *as* the distinct mode of self-disposing who is the only *Son* of the Father (Jn 1:14,18), who is ever turned toward the Father from whom he comes forth (Jn 1:1). At the risk of oversimplification, perhaps we can state it thus: *what* Jesus accomplishes in his mission (one with the *why*) is of its essence eternal and divine, while *how* he attains it (one with his *who*) is as Son; or, in Balthasar’s words: “of his very *essence* he reveals God, but he does so in the *personal*

it is only by virtue of his divine person that he can enter into the desperate situation of a free human being vis-à-vis God, in order to transform it from a dead-end to a situation full of hope.” Emphasis Balthasar’s.

¹⁴⁴ *TD* 2, 84. Emphasis Balthasar’s. See also *TD* 3, 254; and *TD* III (G.O.), 311.

¹⁴⁵ *TD* 3, 167-68.

¹⁴⁶ *TD* 3, 517. See also *TD* 3, 510; and W. Kasper, *GJC*, 172, 244.

¹⁴⁷ *TD* 3, 256. *TD* 3, 255: “Jesus’ certainty regarding the universality and finality of his mission suffices to allow us to take everything said in the Prologue of St. John’s Gospel and trace it back to his earthly consciousness.” See Wm. Hill, *op. cit.*, 11-12.

mode”.¹⁴⁹ This “personal mode” which Jesus expresses in his total self-identification with his mission is that of the Son who, in the Holy Spirit, is commissioned by the Father to fulfill his eschatological purpose. “In the most diverse places and layers of the [New Testament] text, the concept of Jesus’ mission appears linked with his highest qualification as ‘Son of God’, as the latter’s ‘Beloved Son’...[indicating] that his mission is qualitatively different from that of the prophets who preceded him.”¹⁵⁰ The Synoptic Gospels concur, for example, in their presentation of Jesus’ parable of the wicked husbandmen, which professes that in Jesus the Father has acted in a definitive manner, sending his Son as distinct from his previous sending of servants (Mk 12:6; Mt 21:37; Lk 20:13).¹⁵¹ All the Gospels, moreover, testify to the baptism of Jesus, at which event the Father identifies Jesus as “my beloved Son” (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11, Lk 3:22) or “my Chosen One” (Jn 1:34);¹⁵² and the Holy Spirit “descends upon the Son, to ‘remain’ in him and hover over him” unto the fulfillment of his mission (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32,33).¹⁵³ (Indeed, “the Spirit in

¹⁴⁸ *TD* 3, 182: “Jesus knows that, from all time, he is the One who is sent.” In addition, *TD* 3, 227: This is why “for Jesus, there is no conceivable point at which the identity of his ‘I’ and his mission *started*.” Emphasis Balthasar’s. See also *TD* 3, 180, 254; and *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, A, 2, p. 217.

¹⁴⁹ *TD* 3, 225. Emphasis Balthasar’s.

¹⁵⁰ *TD* 3, 150. See also W. Kasper, *JC*, 109ff.; GJC, 169-170; and *ITC*, “The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission” (1985), p. 308.

¹⁵¹ See *TD* 3, 152. Moreover, “when Paul says, in Romans 8:3-4, that God sent ‘his own Son’...it is clear that the mission of this One supercedes the entire OT order, precisely because he is God’s ‘own Son’...(8:32). Or when the Letter to the Hebrews describes Jesus simply as ‘the one sent’ (*apostolos*), it does so in the context of an explanation of his superiority (as Son) to Moses, who was a faithful steward *in* God’s house as a servant, whereas Jesus is set *over* God’s entire house...(Heb 3:1,5,6). Jesus’ preeminence is expressed in classical form in John, where ‘there was a man sent from God’ (1:6) is contrasted with the ‘sending of the Son’ in order that ‘the world might be saved through him’ (3:17)”; *TD* 3, 151.

¹⁵² See *TD* 3, 155-56. Balthasar notes that this identification of Jesus as the ‘beloved Son’ “will be repeated on Mount Tabor (Mt 17:5 par; in Luke, the Son is not ‘beloved’ but ‘chosen’, as in John 1:34 in ancient manuscripts).”

¹⁵³ *TD* 3, 186. Balthasar continues: “‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me’ (Is 61:1), Jesus quotes in his Nazareth address (Lk 4:18), and, in Acts 10:38, Luke again alludes to it: ‘You know...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power,...for God was with him.’” See also Mk 1:12; Mt 12:28; Lk 23:46. In addition, *TD* 3, 164-65: “There can be no doubt that Jesus was someone indwelt, guided and even ‘driven’ by the Spirit, far surpassing the Old Testament prophets and apocalyptic figures; the united witness of the New Testament tradition in this matter must be rooted in historical fact.” On the revelation of the Trinity at the event of Jesus’ transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, see *Prayer*, 156. Also see *ITC*, “Select Questions on Christology” (1981), V, 2, p. 203; “The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission” (1985), 2.4., p. 310.

him and above him is the manifest presence of his divine mission”; see, for instance, Mt 12:28).¹⁵⁴ We can say, therefore, that Jesus’ mission (one with his Person) is itself constituted “in the reciprocal relationship he enjoys with the Father who sends him and the Holy Spirit who fosters communication between them”.¹⁵⁵ This is why, although it is the Son alone who “became flesh” (Jn 1:14), and not the Father or the Spirit, yet in the dramatic form or figure of the incarnate Son there is necessarily made manifest his relation to the Father and to the Spirit. (Indeed, the incarnation of the consubstantial Son of God in Jesus Christ must mean that this divine Person is ontologically constituted only in a trinitarian relation, “for otherwise we would end up with a doctrine of three gods”).¹⁵⁶ Stepping back, then, to behold in faith the dramatic form of Christ’s personal mode in mission, we can see it as the revelatory locus of divine and eternal activity in trinitarian relation: in Jesus Christ, in him whose mission is of its essence divine and eternal, there is disclosed the mystery of the one divine nature that acts (*ad extra*) for us “as a sending and a being sent,...[which twofoldness in its turn] points to a third Reality uniting the Sender and the Sent in a vital way” and proceeding from them mutually at the consummation of the the Son’s eschatological task.¹⁵⁷

On the one side Jesus points to the Father, and on the other to the Spirit: thus we discern the radiant reality of what will be formulated in terms of the divine Trinity. The Father to whom Jesus points is his origin, but Other than he; so too the Spirit, whom he will send from the Father after his return to him, is Other than he. In Christian faith, however, it is only on the basis of Jesus Christ’s own behavior and attitude that we can distinguish such a plurality in God. Only in him is the Trinity

¹⁵⁴ *TD* 3, 521.

¹⁵⁵ *TD* 3, 511. Also *TD* 3, 521: “Jesus has the Spirit in him and over him, and now that he is expressly the one-who-is-sent, it is through this internal--not external--communication that he is in relationship with the Father in heaven.”

¹⁵⁶ “On the concept of person”, in *Communio* 1 (Spring, 1986), 21-22: “In establishing that in Christ, two natures, the divine and the human, are united in one (divine) person, has one paid sufficient attention to the fact that this divine person can, as such, exist only in a (trinitarian) relation, for otherwise we would end up with a doctrine of three gods?”

¹⁵⁷ *GL* 1, 609.

opened up and made accessible....We know about the Father, Son and Spirit as divine “Persons” only through the figure and disposition of Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁸

Hence Balthasar’s assertion that, inasmuch as the ultimate “form-quality” of Christological revelation lies in the dramatic action of Jesus’ divine personal mode--i.e., in the historical unfolding of his relationship as the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit--the divine Being as it appears in him “in no way presents itself as a *phainomenon* of the One as opposed to the Many”; it appears, rather, as “an infinitely determined super-form [*Über-gestalt*]” of tri-relational activity.¹⁵⁹

Moving from the (dramatic) revelatory form [*Gestalt*]¹⁶⁰ of Jesus’ personal mode in mission to his *consciousness*, we can clarify at this point that by his phrase “in the personal mode” Balthasar intends more specifically: in the mode of the relationally filial self-disposing within the divine triune intersubjectivity.¹⁶¹ The foregoing already indicates that Jesus does not present himself as a divine and eternal “I” in self-contained isolation.¹⁶² Rather, throughout his mission, and indeed as integral to it, Jesus “speaks to a Father...with whom he stands in a dialectical relation,

¹⁵⁸ *TD* 3, 507-08. See also *TD* 3, 258; and *MH*, 69.

¹⁵⁹ *GL* 1, 432. In addition, *W&R* 2, 105: “Christ...is indeed wholly the Word of God and revelation of the triune divine life, that is, of the circumincession of the three Persons in a single nature, and so of three divine ‘states’ and ‘spiritualities’. The coming of the Person of the Son in Jesus Christ and the visible manifestation of his relationships to the Father and the Spirit forbid us to resign ourselves...to the view that all distinction, being caught up in the identity of the divine essence, eludes us. The divine unity is one of fullness and not of a bare abstraction.” That is to say, the Trinity is revealed in the mission of Christ as the divine tri-personal life of love in which we know the Persons precisely in their living relational distinction: in their distinct self-disposing as paternal, filial, and spiritual love-in-relation. Hence, to say that “all the *ad extra* activities of God are common to the three Persons” (Ott, *Fund. of Catholic Dogma*, 1, 2, 2, 20; p. 72) ought not to be interpreted as if “all [hypostatic] distinction, being caught up in the identity of the divine essence, eludes us”. See Balthasar’s criticism of philosophy’s notion of the Absolute One in the light of the self-revelation of the triune God: “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 22-23. Also see J. Ratzinger, *Intro.*, 94-104, 127-28, 132; and W. Kasper, *GJC*, 274-75.

¹⁶⁰ “Form” or “*Gestalt*” as used here follows the theological vocabulary of Balthasar, particularly in his theological aesthetics (i.e., his seven volume work, *The Glory of the Lord*). It is not to be identified with the strictly metaphysical (Aristotelian) usage of “form” as found in Thomas Aquinas.

¹⁶¹ Indeed, to the premier principle of theo-drama (viz., “theological persons can only be defined on the basis of the action”; *TD* 3, 13), we need add the direct qualification that the “dramatic action” itself of the theological person is constituted by self-disposing in intersubjective relationality.

¹⁶² *TD* 3, 505: “The Persons in God will never appear onstage as individual Persons, that is, as divine Persons in isolation [from one another].” Rather, (*TD* 3, 269): “the ‘I’ of Jesus also radiates the ‘I’ of the Father with which it is united”; an ‘I’ moreover that knows itself to be the Anointed One in the Spirit, (Is 61:1; Lk 4:21).

who is therefore a Person other than he, but with whom he is, at the same time, one in essence”.¹⁶³ For inasmuch as the Gospels attest that Jesus’ personal mode of self-disposing is as a filial “I” over against the “Thou” of the Father who sends him, and since it is precisely in his personal mode that Jesus reveals God’s essence to be constituted as trinitarian life, then Jesus cannot assume his relational, intersubjective disposition only in virtue of his incarnation, but he must possess it in his divinity--eternally, and independently of the world.¹⁶⁴ J. Ratzinger concurs: “Jesus’ conversations with the Father [meant] the discovery of the dialogue within God [which] led to the assumption of the presence in God of an ‘I’ and a ‘Thou’....[Thus, in Jesus Christ, God reveals that he] is not only *logos* but also *dia-logos*, not only idea and meaning but speech and word in the reciprocal exchange of conversation” between the Father and the Son.¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, Balthasar maintains that Jesus’ “mission-consciousness” defines or delimits, if you will, his “God-consciousness” to be that of filial intentionality over against the Father, which means that Jesus knows himself to be divine in the mode of Sonship.¹⁶⁶ As *mission*-consciousness, it distinguishes the Son (as the One who is sent) from the Father (as the One who sends).¹⁶⁷ And since “no one can give himself a mission”,¹⁶⁸ this same mission-consciousness defines Jesus’ “I” as primarily receptive in self-disposing.

Now inasmuch as Jesus’ consciousness of mission is experienced in terms of his coming from the Father, it necessarily involves consciousness of the Father who sends him: “when Jesus

¹⁶³ *Prayer*, 146. Accordingly (*ibid.*), “Jesus never prays [to the Father] in common with the apostles; he cannot, for his relationship with the Father is not the same as theirs”. See *TD* 3, 199.

¹⁶⁴ See “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 39-40; *GL* 1, 147, 195, 609, 614, 616; *YCY*, 170; and *Prayer*, 149.

¹⁶⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Intro.*, 130-31. And what of the Spirit in this divine dialogue? According to Balthasar (*Prayer*, 150): “The Son always prays to the Father through and in the Holy Spirit; we never see him praying directly to the Holy Spirit. Yet the Spirit is clearly present in his prayer...[and] shows in the Son’s visible life on earth a sovereign freedom that clearly reveals to the believer his own divine personality.”

¹⁶⁶ *TD* 3, 196: “Jesus’ consciousness of Sonship...remains inseparable from his mission consciousness. ...The consciousness of *this* mission must include the knowledge of his [divine] Sonship.” See also *TD* 3, 166, 172-73; and *ITC*, “The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission” (1985), p. 308.

¹⁶⁷ *TD* 3, 168: “[In] the concept of ‘mission’ [*Sendung*]...there is the relationship to the one who sends... but [the latter] is not identical with the one who is sent.” And *TD* 3, 154: “In speaking of a ‘sense of mission’...we imply a distinction between the one who is aware of his mission and the one who sends him.”

¹⁶⁸ *TD* 3, 154.

views his mission, his gaze discerns the Father who is behind it--it is the Father who 'shows him all things' (Jn 5:20)".¹⁶⁹ Indeed, since Jesus' mission-consciousness coincides with his self-consciousness, what the Father shows Jesus as coming forth from his paternal love is precisely *who he is*: Jesus "receives *himself* from the Father".¹⁷⁰ And as inherently concomitant, because the "all" that the Father shows him is the entirety of God's paternal activity (Jn 5:19-20), what Jesus discerns in his mission-consciousness includes the personal mode of God *as Father*. Hence Jesus' self-knowledge is inseparable from his knowledge of the Father, such that he can profess: "No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son" (Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22). In the dramatic action of Jesus' mission, this mutual "identification" of the divine Other¹⁷¹ is testified to in the Father's addressing Jesus as "my beloved Son" (Mk 1:11; cf. Lk 3:22; Mt 3:17), and in Jesus' corresponding address: "Abba".¹⁷²

Moreover, this intersubjective relationship of Jesus with the Father involves the Holy Spirit as he who both "mediates the Father's will to the Son" and "makes this [filial] obedience possible" in the Son, and therefore the Spirit must be always included in Jesus' mission-consciousness.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ *TD* 3, 168.

¹⁷⁰ *TD* 3, 180. Emphasis Balthasar's. See *TD* 2, 87.

¹⁷¹ Although this "identification" is mutual, it is not identical in each Person. For the Father's "identification" of the Son is one with the Father's begetting of the Son; in his generative act the Father gives the Son his very filial identity. The Son, in distinction from the Father, "identifies" the Father--not in bestowing upon the Father paternal identity--but rather in acknowledging, as it were, the Person who has given himself over in his act of begetting the Son; i.e., in knowing his Personal source to be "Father".

¹⁷² *TD* 3, 169: "It is only in connection with his origin in the Father that he can utter the 'I am' that corresponds exactly to the 'Abba'." *GL* 7, 246, n.4: "John emphasises very strongly...that his [Jesus'] ego is identical with his self-understanding as the one sent and proceeding from the Father: 'I know where I come from' (Jn 8:14),... 'I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me' (7:29)." See also *TD* 3, 172. *ITC*, "The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission" (1985), 1.3., p. 309.

¹⁷³ *TD* 3, 187. Elsewhere Balthasar states (*ibid.*, 195): "We can most definitely hold fast to the idea that Jesus knew of his identity as the Son of God right from the start--as his unique relationship to his 'Abba, Father' adequately shows--while acknowledging that the awareness of this identity only came to him through his mission, communicated by the Spirit." Again in *ibid.*, 533: "[T]he Son of God, in order to carry out his mission, does not look at himself (his 'divine ideal', his 'conscience') but at the Father's will, which is set before him anew at every moment by the Holy Spirit." Additionally, see *Prayer*, 150-51; and *WEL*, 17-18; Also see *ITC*, "The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission" (1985), 2.4., p. 310.

Jesus knows the Spirit as the personal mode of the union between the Father's will to send and his own (filial) consenting will to be sent.

The Spirit presents him with the Father's will in ever-new ways and with ever-greater clarity, even though he already has this will within him in the form of his readiness to obey. Between Jesus and the Father there is something (Someone) that communicates the former's mission, namely, the economic form of the eternal unanimity between Father and Son, which becomes a distinct witness to both of them, and with which both of them seal their "Yes". It is, as it were, their "We", which is more than the sum of their "I" and "Thou".¹⁷⁴

Conscious that the Father gives over his "all" to him (one with the Father's commissioning the Son to accomplish the "all" of his eschatological purpose), Jesus knows himself as the One who receives the Father's Spirit "without measure" (Jn 3:34; Lk 14:18; Is 61:1), and in which Spirit the Son corresponds in giving back to the Father the "all" of his "Spirit of mission" with his death on the Cross (Mk 15:37; Lk 23:46; Mt 27:50; Heb 9:14).¹⁷⁵

D. *"The Person of the Son manifests the Person of the Father"*

At this point let us turn our attention more specifically to Jesus' relation to the Father, which sharpening of our focus may be introduced by complementing the key phrase of the previous section (namely, "of his very *essence* Jesus reveals God, but he does so in the *personal* mode") with the following: "it is precisely the Person of the Son who manifests the Person of the Father, the latter appearing in him".¹⁷⁶ Given Balthasar's theodramatic approach according to which the Person of the Son is made known in the dramatic action of his mission, and indeed whose self-disposing demonstrates that he knows and shows himself to coincide entirely with his mission, it follows that inasmuch as Jesus defines his (eschatological) mission as doing the will of him who

¹⁷⁴ *TD* 3, 511. In addition, *TD* 3, 188: "[F]rom Jesus' awareness of his mission (an awareness that has no imaginable beginning) and his consent to it, it follows that this absolute, free consent between himself and the Father is the economic form of their common spiration of the Spirit." On the role of the Spirit in Jesus' relation to the Father, see *TD* 3, 183-91, 520-23; and *Prayer*, 150-53.

¹⁷⁵ See *TD* 3, 151, 189, 506; *Credo*, 77; and *YCY*, 43.

¹⁷⁶ *MP*, 207. See *W&RI*, 22; and *FF*, 27-8.

sent him (Jn 4:34; 6:38; 10:18), performing his Father's works (4:34; 9:4; 14:10) speaking his Father's words (3:34; 7:16; 12:49-50; 14:10,24)--professing, moreover, that he can only do what he sees the Father doing (5:19)--Jesus is defining the very essence of his Person as the (definitive) revealer or interpreter of the Father.

[A]ccording to Jesus Christ's own portrayal of himself...[he proffers] himself consistently as the definitive "interpretation" (Jn 1:18) of God the Father: the Father has not disappeared into Jesus Christ; the Father remains the point of reference from whom Christ comes; on this basis he speaks and acts; he takes his bearings from the Father; and it is to him that he returns. Jesus wants to be understood as "the truth" only in this context, that is, as the Father's perfect unveiling and manifestation in the Son.¹⁷⁷

Balthasar, accordingly, discerns a twofoldness in the *dramatis persona* of Jesus. Jesus is simultaneously the Father's self-expression (*receptive* to the Father's activity) *and* his filial mode of self-expressing (*actively* corresponding to or imaging, and thereby interpreting, the activity of the Father).¹⁷⁸ This insight is summed up in the profession of the Johannine Jesus: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father....it is the Father, living in me, who is accomplishing his work....believe because of the works I do" (Jn 14:9-11). Implicit in this passage is a pair of principles concerning the Father's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, the first of which is in direct agreement with Balthasar's theodramatic axiom. (1) The Person is known in his acting;

¹⁷⁷ TD 3, 506. GL 1, 189: "Jesus himself consciously...claimed to be the revealer of the Father (Jn 14:9)." See also GL 1, 135, 154, 195, 611-13; TD 2, 91; YCY, 102; UYB, 10; and "God is his own exegete", *Communio* 4 (Winter, 1986), 280-87. J. Ratzinger is thinking along these same lines when he states: "Insofar as Jesus is called 'Son' [he] is thereby made relative to the Father...Christology is ratified as a statement of relation, [with] the total reference of Christ back to the Father"; *Intro.*, 133. See in addition ITC, "The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission" (1985), 1.2., p. 308; and 2.3., p. 310.

¹⁷⁸ In GL 2, Balthasar summarizes St. Bonaventure's thought regarding the twofold expressive character of the Son. In his analysis of the concept of *species* (closely related to that of image), Bonaventure remarks on both "the (passive) character of the expression of an archetype,...and the (active) act of expressive mediation of this archetype....This, precisely, is the position of the Word in God: he gives expression to the Father who is the archetype, and himself becomes an expressive archetype in relation to the world, precisely insofar as he gives perfect expression to the paternal archetype"; GL 2, 298; see I d31 II, 2 q3 (I 543-45). Balthasar understands Bonaventure's use of the term '*expressivus*' as corresponding to the German '*ausdrückend*', "in which all the weight is placed upon the relationship of expression itself"; 287; see *Hex.* 12, 3 (V 385a). Now the relationship of expression entails both "the original...the principle which makes itself clear and expresses itself in the copy itself...(from the Father to the Son), and which makes itself an expression (from the Son to the Father)....[B]ecause as Son he wishes to be nothing else than the image of the

specifically, the Person of the Father is known in the work he accomplishes. (2) Paternal action engenders properly filial action such that the Father's work is accomplished in the work that the Son does, the latter entailing an imaging correspondence.¹⁷⁹ When these principles are applied consistently to an interpretation of Jesus' existence in mission, the result is a "patrogen(n)etic"¹⁸⁰ conception of the dramatic action of the Son. All that the Son does in being sent (his words, his deeds, his death and resurrection) is engendered by the Father; and what the Father does in sending the Son is to generate the work of the One Sent. Since the Son's work is what the Father "*fathers*", God the Father can indeed be seen in the Son as the living, generating source of the action that Jesus performs. And inasmuch as that which is generated bears a likeness to its generator, the action of the Son is not only derivative but imitative. "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

Consequently, we must avoid two extremes in our understanding of the role of Jesus as revealer of the Father, extremes which arise from isolating either principle noted above. On the one hand, to say that Jesus is the Father's self-representation ought not to be understood as if Jesus were a rigidly mechanical reproduction of the Father or the purely passive impression of a unilateral expression by the Father. On the other hand, "the danger looms of understanding the Son's act of revelation as his own activity and no longer, as he himself affirms, as the activity of the

Father, he transmits this image and thereby lays the foundation for every creaturely attitude before God"; 299; see I d31 II, 2 q3 (I 544ab). "Where there is an image, there is imitation"; I d31 II, I q21 *fund.* 4 (I 540a); cited on 287.

¹⁷⁹ Regarding Jesus' acting in and by virtue of the Father's "perpetually operative love, holiness, and demands" (TD 3, 110), see also Jn 4:34; 5:17,19,30; 6:57; 8:28-29; 10:37-38; 15:9-10; 17:4,7-8; and GL 1, 147, 614, 616; GL 7, 283; TD 2, 87; WEL, 70, 154; and YCY, 144. According to J. Ratzinger, *Intro.*, 133: "precisely because he is the Son he can only *operate* by virtue of him to whom he owes his whole existence (see Jn 5:19,30)". Italics are author's.

¹⁸⁰ We use the term "patrogen(n)etic" as defined by R. Schulte in "Die Heilstat des Vaters in Christus," *Mysterium Salutis*, Vol. III/1, pp. 49-84; here, p. 53: "In view of the trinitarian and christological structure of the entire order of creation and salvation...it is helpful to use the dual term 'genetic/gennetic', familiar to us from the trinitarian controversies, and to apply it, albeit now in a reverse direction, i.e., from the point of view of God the *Father*, to all things as proceeding from him...('ad intra' as well as 'ad extra')...." This passage from Schulte is noted by N. Hoffmann in his essay "Atonement and the Spirituality of the Sacred Heart," found in *Faith in Christ and the Worship of Christ*, ed. Leo Scheffczyk, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 174, n. 183.

Father in him, of the Father who expresses and glorifies himself in the Son's form and word".¹⁸¹ Instead, we need maintain at one and the same time the dialectic inherent in the disposition constitutive of the Son, namely, the filial mode of receptivity/activity: "In all that the Son is and does the Father expresses himself. The Son's love in its totality is a representation of the Father's."¹⁸² As "the true actor" considers himself as one sent from the author to the audience with the responsibility of embodying the author's poetic word in his own interpretive performance, and thus serving as the locus of the auctorial "presence" on stage,¹⁸³ so Jesus "sees himself totally as 'coming from the Father' to men,...as the 'Word from the Father'", as the one given "the task...of expressing God's Fatherhood through his entire being", and thereby serving as the revelatory locus of the Father's presence in the world.¹⁸⁴

There is one more step to be taken here, based upon what has already been established in section B. By reason of the eschatological dimension of Jesus' words and deeds, Balthasar can contend that "a 'coming' of this kind can only have God as its point of departure",¹⁸⁵ as John's Gospel articulates with Jesus' declarations: "I have come in my Father's name" (Jn 5:43); "I proceeded and came forth from God" (8:42); "I came from the Father and have come into the world" (16:28).

This implies something much more radical than the mere appointment of a messenger or representative ("*shaliach*") or even the choosing of a prophet (even prophets chosen "from the womb", like Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Paul). Rather, the sending (*missio*) has its roots in a primordial proceeding (*processio*) from

¹⁸¹ *GL* 1, 612. See also *GL* 1, 435-36; *GL* 7, 283; *YCY*, 101-3; *DJKU*, 84; and *WEL*, 240.

¹⁸² *Prayer*, 148. Similarly, Balthasar remarks that Jesus "does not present himself as the ultimate source of love, does not make his human existence into a revelation of his own eternal love, but into a transparency of the love of the Father"; *Rdr*, 127. See "On the concept of person", *art. cit.*, 21-22; and *TD* 3, 157, 224, 511; *GL* 7, 376-77; *WEL*, 12, 42; *FF*, 28. Also *ITC*, "Theology, Christology, Anthropology" (1981), II, A, 5, p. 219.

¹⁸³ *TD* 1, 194, 262, 273, 278, 281, 282, 307, 308, 311.

¹⁸⁴ *TD* 3, 172. And *TD* 3, 136: "[W]ith his whole being [Jesus] always points to the God who sends him and whose presence he embodies." Hence, H. Mühlen's assertion in *Der Heilige Geist als Person*, 2d ed. (1966), 89: "When Jesus utters the 'I am', therefore, he is initially revealing, not himself, but the Father."

¹⁸⁵ *TD* 3, 152. And *TD* 3, 257: "[Given] his mission of bringing everything to perfection...he has not been given the role of Perfecter by any other authority but the Creator."

God....This in turn presupposes that he was always, and had always been, “with” God (Jn 1:1,18).¹⁸⁶

In distinction from every other mission bestowed upon a human being, Jesus knows that his eschatological mission is the (definitive) representation of God’s Paternity,¹⁸⁷ and hence he knows himself to be “the divine, that is, eternal Offspring of him-who-sends, whom he himself calls ‘Father’ in a sense that bursts all analogies”.¹⁸⁸ If we consider that in the spatio-temporal order of his coming forth from the Father Jesus knows himself to be one with his mission, this can only be the economic manifestation that the divine Person of the Son *is* his “primordial proceeding” from the Father. By this route, Balthasar arrives at the trinitarian *theologoumenon* that the Son’s *missio* is the economic form of his eternal *processio* from the Father, and which eternal *processio* constitutes the divine Person of the Son.¹⁸⁹ In view of his mission, therefore, we are given the revelation of the (divine and eternal) Person of the Son and consequently can conclude that “every ‘Christology from below’ presupposes a ‘Christology from above’”.¹⁹⁰

But we have yet to consider in a systematic fashion the patrogen(n)etic character of the dramatic action of Jesus in order to “see” the Father as he makes himself known in the Son.

¹⁸⁶ TD 3, 154. Balthasar presents a similar argument in TD 3, 257: “[T]here is something special about the mission of Jesus because of its universality; it is qualitatively different from all previous missions, for it initiates the new and eternal Covenant. Where there was once the ‘law given through Moses’ there is now ‘fullness, grace upon grace, truth made manifest’, ‘the declaring of God’ (Jn 1:16f.). Thus the origin from which this mission flows is the highest conceivable: ‘the Word in the beginning’ (Jn 1:1).” See TD 3, 151-52; and ITC, “The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission” (1985), 1.2., p. 309.

¹⁸⁷ See TD 3, 136, 172, 183, 506.

¹⁸⁸ TD 3, 518. See TD 3, 153-54. Also Wm. Hill, *op. cit.*, 4, 6, 8-10, 15; and ITC, “The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission” (1985), 2.3., p. 310.

¹⁸⁹ “On the concept of person”, *art. cit.*, 25: “Here we can presuppose, with St. Thomas, that in a trinitarian sense *missio* is the economic form of the eternal *processio* that constitutes the person of the Son...in God.” Also TD 1, 646: “[According to Thomas Aquinas (*S. Th.* I, q. 43, a. 1-8)] in Christ the *processio* within the Godhead, which constitutes the Son as the Father’s dialogue partner, is identical...with the *missio*, the sending of the Son to mankind.” And TD 3, 226: “[H]is being sent (*missio*) by the Father is a modality of his proceeding (*processio*) from the Father.” See ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, A, 5, p. 219; W. Kasper, *GJC*, 278; and St. Thomas, *In Sententias*, 1, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1, sol.; I, q. 43, a. 2, ad. 2.

¹⁹⁰ TD 2, 185.

D.1. *The Sender is revealed in the One Sent*

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...[for] the Father, living in me, is doing his works” (Jn 14:9-10). Insofar as the mission of the Son is a temporal modality of his eternal procession from the Father, the work the Father does in the life-task of Jesus must be a temporal modality of his eternal generation of the Son. Accordingly, “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” means that precisely in the modality of the Son’s being sent can be discerned the Father in his act of sending and therein his eternal and primordial act of generating. This, then, is “the truth” that Jesus reveals in his own Person (Jn 17:6-8): the trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son, in which the “inaccessible” Father is made manifest to the world in the mission of his Son.¹⁹¹ “Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me, sees the one who sent me” (Jn 12:44-45).

Here let us make clear and explicit certain metaphorical evocations in Balthasar’s discussion of the author-actor model in view of his understanding of the relationship between the Father and the incarnate Son, keeping our focus on the Father-Author. We need recall from chapter I that the author, as the originator of the drama and of each role/character therein, is the one ultimately responsible for the play’s intent, development, and final resolution.¹⁹² Each role/character proceeds from his auctorial creativity as his self-expression or “word”, and through the unfolding of the play’s action this “word” communicates “precisely what the [dramatic] poet has to say”.¹⁹³ The author, moreover, both reveals and conceals himself in this “word” or role; that is, he expresses *himself* (as author) in bringing forth a created “I” that is *other* than he.¹⁹⁴ He does so by emptying or outpouring himself in creative activity into the condition of the other (the

¹⁹¹ See *WEL*, 80; *GL* 1, 135, 612; *GL* 7, 377; and *TD* 3, 506.

¹⁹² See *TD* 1, 261, 269-70, 273.

¹⁹³ *TD* 1, 273.

¹⁹⁴ See *TD* 1, 274.

role/character which he himself has established), and accompanying the role/character “from within” toward its full realization.¹⁹⁵ Insofar as his self-expressive creativity is immanent in the role/character, the author, as it were, delivers himself over to the actor while summoning him to a corresponding self-delivering-over in his interpretive identification with the role given him.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, we can speak of an auctorial kenosis (here in relation to the actor, albeit inseparable from the author’s handing over of the role) in which the author’s originative creativity is somehow immanent in (as guiding and facilitating) the actor’s corresponding creativity; we have even seen that the author’s “making space” for the actor’s (interpretive) disposing of his poetic “word” or work is at essence an effective making creative of the actor in his turn.¹⁹⁷ Accordingly, we ought not to consider the author’s activity as being in one place and its presentation by the actor in another; rather, “the dramatic work [which coincides with the author’s activity] is made present totally and exclusively *in* the [actor’s] performance”.¹⁹⁸ Thus, to fully comprehend “the true actor’s” portrayal is to recognize it as “even now” proceeding from the originative, determinative, and immanently accompanying power of the author’s self-expressive creativity. It is, then, to see the “incarnation” of the poet’s self-uttering in the performance of the actor,¹⁹⁹ and therein to discern the “revelation” of the creative source: the author.²⁰⁰

With respect to salvation history, it is God the Father who is the Alpha and the Omega of the theodramatic action. “God the Father is and remains the Author from whom everything comes and who accepts responsibility for it all; [while] he is prior to the play and above it,...[yet] he is

¹⁹⁵ See *TD* 1, 271-74.

¹⁹⁶ See *TD* 1, 284, 291.

¹⁹⁷ See *TD* 1, 279.

¹⁹⁸ See *TD* 1, 281-82.

¹⁹⁹ See *TD* 1, 311 and 308.

²⁰⁰ See *TD* 1, 262, 307.

most deeply and irreversibly involved in it.”²⁰¹ The two modalities of paternal activity that are indicated here as intrinsic to the economic work of the Father--namely, transcendence and immanence--comprise equally the Father’s self-engagement with the players on the world-stage. Concerning the Son’s entrance by becoming “flesh”, the Father-Author can be said to be transcendent vis-à-vis his incarnate Son inasmuch as he acts from the “distance” that belongs to the determinative originator who himself is not sent.²⁰² Nonetheless, this paternal transcendence is itself in function of a radical association, since the Son comes forth with the “role” or mission of speaking the words and performing the works of the Father. Indeed, as we have noted, “the task given him by the Father is that of expressing God’s Fatherhood through his entire being”.²⁰³ This task, however, is not performed of himself (Jn 5:19,30; 8:28), as if the Father in his act of sending the Son forth keeps himself back at an uninvolved distance, leaving the Son to act quite alone (Jn 8:16,29; 16:32). Rather, in his act of sending, the Father remains immanent in the dramatic action of the One Sent.²⁰⁴ Later we will have more to say about Balthasar’s notion that the Son’s interpretive activity requires the “space” inherent in personal autonomy. Being “space” *for* interpretive activity, it is “space” received *from* the Father (Jn 5:26; 6:57). *In* this “space” of filial self-disposing the Father is at work, engendering and accompanying the self-donation proper to the Son (Jn 5:19-20; 8:28-29; 14:10-11).²⁰⁵ But for the present we are content to affirm that, as regards the Father’s act of sending, what we have is precisely his generative self-expressive activity entering into the action on the world stage in the dramatic action of his Son. For an “audience” to

²⁰¹ *TD* 3, 532. See also *TD* 3, 21, 153; and *WEL*, 79.

²⁰² “The Father is the One who sends, and in this act of sending he establishes, guides and takes responsibility for Jesus’ whole existence on earth; he lays down the latter’s purpose right from the start, namely, the salvation of the world (Jn 3:17; 6:39)”; *TD* 3, 153.

²⁰³ *TD* 3, 172.

²⁰⁴ According to K. Rengstorf, in *ThW* I, 404, “the formula *o pempas (pater)* is used [by John (5:37; 7:28; 8:16,18,29; 12:49)] to assert God’s involvement in the work of Jesus through the act of sending him”.

hear and to see Jesus in the performance of his mission would mean, at the same time, “to perceive Jesus’ word as the Word of the Father and to understand Jesus’ deeds as the work of the Father, for they are ‘performed with the power of my Father’ (Jn 10:32), indeed they are ‘the works of my Father’ (10:37)”.²⁰⁶

It follows that these very works are expressive of a oneness between Father and Son that infinitely surpasses the creative collaboration between author and actor. Balthasar directs us to consider that since it is this oneness of activity between Father and Son that grounds Jesus’ calling to the “audience” to believe in him (Jn 10:30,37-38) and because, in the biblical sense, “one can believe only in God”,²⁰⁷ then the testimony given by Jesus’ works evidences the identity of nature between the Father and the Son. Indeed, it is evidence of the *generative* nature of the Father’s work, and thus simultaneously of the *trinitarian* nature of the one Godhead, inasmuch as it implies that only God as Son can authentically express God as Father.

D.2. *The eschatological “all” of the Father’s work in Jesus*

We have seen that the oneness of activity between the Father and Jesus Christ takes place in terms of the hypostatic difference indicated in the first verse of the Johannine prologue: “the Word was with God, the Word was God”. This oneness of activity, however, does not manifest itself in such a way that it can be abstracted from the dramatic unfolding of Jesus’ entire life-task, for while this oneness presupposes the divine nature of Jesus’ activity it does so only as coincident with the eschatological nature of the same.

²⁰⁵ Regarding Jesus’ acting in and by virtue of the Father’s “perpetually operative love, holiness, and demands” (TD3, 110), see also Jn 4:34; 5:17,19,30; 6:57; 15:9-10; 17:4,7-8; and GL1, 147, 614, 616; GL7, 283; TD2, 87; WEL, 70, 154; and YCY, 144.

²⁰⁶ GL1, 668. In addition, TD3, 153: The Father “is seen to be present in the One who is sent (Jn 12:45), witnessing to himself in him (5:37; 8:18); he dwells with him (8:16,29; 16:32)...It is important for the One who sends to be ‘known’ (15:21), ‘believed’ (5:24; 12:44) and ‘honored’ (5:23) in the One who is sent.” See also TD1, 359; GL1, 614; WEL, 79; FF, 28; and YCY, 101.

²⁰⁷ GL1, 669.

In the awareness that his personal identity is co-extensive with his mission, Jesus is sent to bring to realization the eschatological “all” of the Father’s work for the world (Jn 19:30). “Jesus knew that the Father had put *everything* into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God” (Jn 13:3). Indeed he is sent to accomplish *all* that the Father does (Jn 5:19-20) as the one who receives *all* that the Father has (Jn 16:15).²⁰⁸ Since what the Father does--his self-expressive activity--in the works of Jesus is the economic form of his immanent generating of the Son, what is unveiled in the eschatological “all” accomplished in the mission of Jesus is precisely God’s eternal and inner-divine self-expressive act as Father. That is to say, this “all” of the Father’s work in Jesus coincides with the entirety of his divine Person; it can only be the full and definitive disclosure of the divine Person that the Father eternally is. Thus is it revealed to us that the Father *is* his primordial act of generating the Son.²⁰⁹ There is no *Deus absconditus* hidden behind the Son’s mission, as if there could be “more” to the Father’s Person than his total self-giving in the Son²¹⁰--even if, at the same time, the “language” of Jesus’ earthly existence presents this revelation by way of analogy.

D.3. *The Cross as the consummation of the Father’s self-disclosure*

To this point we have not yet said all in regard to the eschatological “all” of the Father’s work in the mission of Jesus. It remains for us to acknowledge the great interpretations of the paschal event by Paul and John, according to which Jesus’ whole life is directed to the Cross as the

²⁰⁸ See Jn 3:35; 5:22,26; 6:40; 14:26; 16:13; 17:7,10; Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22; Acts 2:32-36; Phil 2:9-10; Eph 1:3-14; Rom 6:10-11; 8:32; Heb 1:2-4. And TD3, 207, 509, 510, 516-20. Also, W. Kasper, *GJC*, 244; and *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, A, 4, p. 218.

²⁰⁹ See “On the concept of person”, *art. cit.*, 26; *YCY*, 159; and *WEL*, 13-15.

²¹⁰ TD 3, 506-7: “[T]he divine Ground, the Father, is really and exhaustively expounded in the incarnate Son.” “[For] if God cannot speak in such a way that he expresses *himself*, if the Word of God, the Son, does not have the power to show us the Father...then we fall back behind Nicea and revert to Arianism and Middle Platonism”; TD 2, 12. Emphasis Balthasar’s. See also GL 1, 435; GL 7, 384; TD IV, 73; *W&RI*, 22-23; *WEL*, 14-15, 80; and W. Kasper’s *GJC*, 274.

definitive revelation of the Father's love.²¹¹ The Synoptics, in their turn, recount the activity of Jesus prior to his Passion only in the twofold light of the Cross and Resurrection. The Cross is, for them, "*the* event towards which the history of his life is oriented and through which its other episodes receive their meaning".²¹² Furthermore, the Tradition consistently teaches, from the earliest writings of the Church Fathers, that the incarnation of the Son is ordered to the Cross as to its goal.²¹³ The Cross is seen not simply as an adventitious consequence of Jesus' earthly ministry, but as the latter's inner purpose and meaning. It is in the paschal event of Jesus, therefore, when Jesus' mission reaches its end with the outpouring of his "all" for the sake of the world, that the eschatological "all" of the Father's self-expressive work in his sending of the Son attains its representational acme.

What this means within the context of Balthasar's theodramatic hermeneutics is that "the Cross appears as the center and zenith of the theodramatic action".²¹⁴ It is the dramatic form of the Crucified One--of filial love emptying itself unto death--that confronts us as the consummate exegesis of God's love as Father.²¹⁵ The First Epistle of John provides us with an inspired proclamation of the dramatic form in which God reveals himself: "God is love. God's love was revealed in our midst in this way: he sent his only Son to the world" (1Jn 4:8-9); indeed, "the way we came to understand love was that he [the Son] laid down his life for us" (1Jn 3:16). Clearly, faith's definitive understanding of God's essence--and, as inherently concomitant, that of love--is obtained on the basis of the Father's act of sending which culminates in the Son's laying down of

²¹¹ Rom 8:32; Jn 3:16; 1Jn 4:7-10; 3:16. See *MP*, 140; *GL* 7, 378. And, *TD* 4, 319: "[H]ere and in what follows, the 'Cross' is always used in the Pauline-Johannine sense--which is also that of the Synoptics--that is, including the Resurrection."

²¹² P. Tillich, *Systematische Theologie* II (Stuttgart 1958), 171, as cited by Balthasar in *MP*, 17. See also *TD* 3, 239.

²¹³ See *MP*, 22.

²¹⁴ *TD* 3, 50.

²¹⁵ "God is his own exegete", *art. cit.*, 283: "The highest interpretation of the Father, takes place...in the last stage of the earthly existence of Jesus--in the Passion." *Ibid.*, 284: "The cross alone is God's final exegesis."

his life. What is less clear, however, and thus remains a theological task, is the elucidation of the relation between the paternal act of sending and its exegetical counterpart in the Son's surrender of his life. Or put another way: it remains for theological reflection to extend its articulation of the Fatherhood of God in terms of its representation in the dramatic form of the Crucified One.²¹⁶

To this purpose, let us consider another Johannine passage, one which captures the dramatic form of the Crucified One in a single freeze-frame, as it were.

“When you have lifted up the Son of Man [on the Cross],
then you will know that I AM
and that I do nothing of myself....
[H]e who sent me is with me,
he has not left me to myself,
for I always do what pleases him.” (Jn 8:28-29)

Here we have the Son's dying presented by the evangelist as the final and decisive act whereby the Son makes known his consubstantial oneness with the Father (“that I AM”). Yet this oneness is explained in terms of an interpersonal activity: the Son's act of self-surrender (that which his filial “I” does) is accomplished by virtue of the Father's act of sending. What is more, this sending proves itself to be an ever-accompanying activity. The Father's sending of the Son is always at the same time his accompanying of the Son; his is a sending-forth that remains always a being-with (cf. Jn 16:32).²¹⁷ Balthasar's remarks on the Son's being accompanied by the Father clearly emphasize the generative nature of this paternal accompaniment: “The accompaniment has a hardly

²¹⁶ *Rdr*, 129: “So little is his mission a private undertaking, but a showing forth of God [the Father] in a mission, so little is his death a private one, but rather the culmination of this presentation of God: the event ‘on the third day’ demonstrates to faith that God [the Father] stood by his ‘interpreter’.” See also *TD* 3, 530 and *GL* 1, 479. These assertions are echoed in John Paul II's encyclical *On the Mercy of God (Dives in misericordia)*, November 13, 1980, #8: “The Paschal Mystery is Christ at the summit of the revelation of the inscrutable mystery of God. It is precisely then that the words pronounced in the Upper Room are completely fulfilled: ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father’.” There is also the following from J. Ratzinger's article “Jesus Christ today”, *Communio* 17 (Spring, 1990), 80-81, with inner citations from C. Schönborn's work, *Die Christus-Ikon* (Schaffhausen, 1984), 96-97: “The surrender to the formlessness of his death makes the love of the Father visible....The crucified one is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15).’...Therefore, he who sees Christ, the crucified one, sees the Father, and the entire trinitarian mystery. For we must add, when one sees the Father in Christ, then in him the veil of the temple is truly rent, and the interior of God is laid bare.”

imaginable intimacy which is expressed in the Son's prayer-life and, moving from this, in his whole existence....[T]he Father's [accompanying] love...becomes [in the Son] its answering coactuation or realization", thereby showing its generative power.²¹⁸

Since what the Father's love engenders as "its answering coactuation" is the Son's act of loving "to the end", self-expropriation without remainder as exemplified in the Son's redemptive death is the supreme creaturely form of an absolute love that originates in the Father. More precisely, the Son's laying down of his life is in the first place a patrogen(n)etic work, the work of God in his Paternity. Jesus' dying is the human realization of his being "fathered" economically as the Image of the Father.

The Johannine Jesus affirms essentially the same *theo*-logical significance of the Cross of Christ when he speaks of the event of his dying on the Cross as the "hour" when the Father "glorifies" himself or glorifies his "name" (Jn 12:28), and does so in his Son, whose total self-surrender is the final manifestation of the glory of his fathering love (Jn 13:31; 15:9; 17:4f.).²¹⁹ Balthasar does not hesitate to link this Johannine vision with the older pre-Pauline hymn found in the Letter to the Philippians (2:6-11), which proclaims that it is because of the Son's kenosis unto "death on a cross" that God gives him "the name"--i.e., the divine name revealed to Moses--by which the Son is to be worshipped and adored equally with the Father; indeed it is precisely this filial kenosis culminating in the paschal event that is "to the glory of God the Father".

In light of the foregoing Scriptural data, and guided by the biblically derived insight that paternal action is generative of properly filial action such that the former begets its likeness in the latter, Balthasar states that "the Son, by humiliating himself, intended to express..., as he repeatedly

²¹⁷ *DJKU*, 77: "Jesus, who was sent out by the Father, was yet accompanied on his 'journey' by the One who sent him."

²¹⁸ *Rdr*, 176.

said,...the inmost nature and disposition of the Father who sent him”.²²⁰ And again: “in giving up his ‘divine form’ with his kenotic self-giving, [the Son] has gone to the ultimate, and he...lets his self-donation, sacrifice, and kenosis be demonstrated as the authentic power and glory of God”.²²¹ Since “the authentic power and glory of God” the Father (Phil 2:11) are identical with his generative activity, “the inmost nature and disposition” of this generative activity can be regarded as kenotic: a primal self-emptying that engenders “its answering coactuation” in the Son.²²² For assuredly, if all that the Son does in his mission is at once the expression of the Father and his own active imitation of the paternal archetype, then the extent of the Son’s kenotic self-giving manifests the measure and form of the Father’s generative self-donation “in all its amplitude”.²²³ The love with which the Son “lays down his life” (Jn 10:11-18) offers a revelatory imitation of the love of the Father, who is “first” in laying down all that *he* is, giving over his entire divinity, in his act of generating the consubstantial Son. In a word, it is the boundless kenosis of the Father that “appears” in the boundless kenosis of his Son and Image.²²⁴ Accordingly, the uttermost end of the Son’s mission (Jn 19:30) is the revelation of a beginning: that is, of the eternal begetting (Jn 1:1). The Son’s total self-offering on the Cross as the climax of his mission (and therefore as the temporally expressed “consummation” of his Person),²²⁵ being the historical modality of his inner-

²¹⁹ See *MP*, 122, where Balthasar also cites the following from R. Bultmann, *Johannes*, p. 357, n.6: “The *onoma* [name] of the Father designates the Father himself, and that because the Father is glorified when he is recognized, named as Father.”

²²⁰ *Prayer*, 148.

²²¹ *Rdr*, 146. See also *GL* 7, 247.

²²² *WEL*, 70: “The Son does not call himself the eternal product of this outpouring [of the one divine love]; rather he is within it, and he himself pours out—his outpouring is the ‘truth’ that reveals the Father’s outpouring.” See also *GL* 1, 609, 611-12, 616; and *GL* 7, 283, 311, 360, 376-77.

²²³ *MP*, 175. This “amplitude” contains the eschatological “all” of the Father’s act in his Son. See also *MP*, 136; *TD* 3, 119-20, 518.

²²⁴ See *GL* 7, 283.

²²⁵ *TD* 3, 230: Since “his mission...is identical with the ‘I’ who is thus sent...it is only by carrying out his task that the Incarnate One realizes himself”. “For...his mission is the personalizing element”; *TD* 3, 509. Hence, *TD* 3, 37: “As far as the person of Jesus is concerned, the Incarnation of the Word is complete when he returns...to the Father.” See *TD* 3, 51, 157-59, 201, 458. And *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, A, 5, p. 219: “The

divine and eternal generation from the Father, is the unparalleled image of the “all” of God’s primal self-outpouring as generative love in the Son, which limitless kenotic act eternally constitutes the Person of the Father.

Taking seriously the *theologoumenon* that the Father’s sending the Son is the extension of his generating the Son, Balthasar holds that God’s primordial Fatherhood “can only mean the giving away of everything that the Father is, including his entire Godhead (for God, as God, ‘has’ nothing apart from what he ‘is’)” to and in the Son; “it is a giving-away that, in the Father’s act of generation... leaves the latter’s womb ‘empty’ [without remainder]: in God, poverty and wealth are one and the same”.²²⁶ Since the Father eternally gives away the “all” that he is--expresses the entirety of his Person--as generative love in the Son, the Son is begotten as equal in all to the Father and in this sense possesses the full wealth of the divinity.²²⁷ Yet precisely inasmuch as the Son is begotten as consubstantial with the Father, his receiving all from the Father (i.e., his ‘wealth’) is “one and the same” with his reciprocally surrendering all to the Father (i.e., his ‘poverty’). It is only in perfectly reciprocating the fullness of the Father’s self-emptying love (kenosis) that the Son manifests his consubstantiality with the Father.

Only in holding-onto-nothing-for-himself is God Father at all; he pours forth his substance and generates the Son; and only in the holding-on-to-nothing-for-himself of what has been received does the Son show himself to be of the same essence of the Father, and in this shared holding-onto-nothing-for-themselves are they one in the Spirit, who is, after all, the expression and personification of this holding-onto-nothing-for-himself of God and the eternal new beginning and eternal product of this ceaselessly flowing movement. If the Second Person steps out of this circling

preexistence of Jesus Christ should be understood from the point of view of the history of Jesus Christ and above all from his completion in the event of Easter.”

²²⁶ *TD* 3, 518. See also A. Brunner, *Eine neue Schöpfung* (Paderborn, 1952), chap. 2: “Possession and poverty”.

²²⁷ See *WEL*, 13-15, 80. In addition, Thomas Aquinas: “According to Augustine, there is another way of understanding the passages [in John’s Gospel] which seem to imply a lesser status (*minoritas*) in the Son, although in fact they do not. One can refer them to the origin of the Son from the Father. For although the Son is equal to the Father in all things, nevertheless he has this from the Father by eternal generation....Thus ‘The Son can do nothing of himself’ (Jn 5:19) does not imply inequality, because this text speaks about the relation [of generation], while equality and inequality have to do with quantity” (*Super Joannem*, n. 747 and 749, p. 140). This text from St. Thomas is cited by M. Waldstein in his article, “von Balthasar’s The Glory of the Lord”, *Communio* 14, (Spring, 1987), 28-29.

life in order to offer the world what is the totality of God, his style of life will not be the grasping demeanor of a pantocrator but the opposite: the Son lays bare the heart of the Father as he becomes the servant of all and breathes out into the world his Spirit of service and of the last place.²²⁸

We are now in a position to understand why the mystery of the Person of Jesus as the consubstantial Image of the Father--and concomitantly, the mystery of the Person of the Father--is fully revealed only in the Son's total self-giving-over on the Cross, in enacting his self-impoverishing love to the end (Jn 8:28-29; 13:1), by which he demonstrates that he alone knows the Father as he is (Mt 11:27) and shows the world that he loves the Father as the Father has loved him (Jn 14:31; 15:9-10).

Here, then, is further confirmation of Balthasar's theodramatic principle: for the foregoing means that the Person of Jesus cannot be defined as the consubstantial Son/Image of God in isolation from the climax of his mission in Cross and Resurrection; and as its counterpart: the Person of the Father who coincides with the "all" of his work cannot be defined in isolation from the fulfillment of his economic generative activity in the Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus. Expressed in specifically theodramatic terms: it is only "as a result of his utter and total performance of his mission" that the Son-Actor realizes "the utter and total identification of his character",²²⁹ and thereby also the identification of the Father-Author whose self-expressive work he perfectly makes present *in* his dramatic action. Since this is essentially an assertion that the full doctrine of the Trinity can only be developed starting from a theology of the Cross, it becomes clear how it is that John, beholding the eschatological "all" of God's work as Father accomplished in "the exalted Pierced One" (Jn 19:35,37), and thus seeing in him ("*Ecce Homo*", Jn 19:5) "the definitive meditative icon of the Father,...the final representation and interpretation of the God

²²⁸ *Rdr*, 27 (= *Pneuma und Institution*, Einsiedeln, 1974, 114f.) See also *TD* 4, 323-24.

²²⁹ *TD* 3, 201. See also *TD* 3, 51.

whom no one has seen (Jn 1:18)”,²³⁰ can make profession in a *pro*-logue: “we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father” (Jn 1:14), who in the beginning was with God and was God (Jn 1:1), and who as the One who eternally receives the fullness of the divine Being from the unlimited self-giving of the Father alone can be sent forth in the modality of historical mission as the consubstantial Image and thus the perfect revealer of the Father to the world (Jn 1:18; Heb 1:3). In Balthasar’s words: “If the Son were not God, the Father would not have been able, in [the Crucified and Risen] Christ, to express and give himself in *all* his truth...; in that case, how could we say that ‘God *is* love’ (1Jn 4:16)?”²³¹

But let us take note: in making assertions about the kenotic character of the hypostatic modes of inner-trinitarian love, Balthasar is aware that, at best, a notion conceived by the human mind and applied to the immanent Trinity can claim no more than a correct albeit inadequate analogical signification of the ineffable divine reality. For him, the eternal generation of the Son is the transcendental theological ground of the temporal mission of the Son; the two orders--immanent and economic--in which the relationship between the Father and the Son unfolds are not to be regarded as simply identical. Balthasar considers the kenosis of the Son unto the paschal mystery (Phil 2:6-11) as providing an analogy, inasmuch as it is the economic form or modality, of his inner divine procession from the Father. Thus when he attributes “kenosis” to the immanent

²³⁰ *MP*, 129. St. Basil spoke of the Son’s revelatory function in the following way: “For all things that are the Father’s are beheld in the Son, and all things that are the Son’s are the Father’s....Thus the hypostasis of the Son becomes as it were the form and face of the knowledge of the Father, and the hypostasis of the Father is known in the form of the Son, while the proper quality which is contemplated therein remains for the plain distinction of the hypostases.” Letter 38, 8, PG32, 340, LNPF, VIII, 141.

²³¹ *TD* 3, 520. Emphasis mine. And *YCY*, 171: “[T]he Son is God from God, Light from Light, eternal Word from the Father’s eternal source, and as such he provides total accessibility to the One who speaks in him and through him [i.e., the Father].” See *TD* 2, 12; *TD* 3, 44; and *WEL*, 14.

trinitarian life of mutual self-giving, Balthasar understands the notion to carry an analogical, not univocal, predication.²³²

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*Excursus:
God the Father and his Archetypal Child: The Parent-Child Model*

“The Son can do only what he sees the Father doing. And whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and everything the Father does he shows him” (Jn 5:19-20).

According to Balthasar’s reading of the Johannine Gospel, Jesus, in knowing God’s paternal love, is enabled to respond by disposing of himself in imitation of his fatherly Origin (Jn 5:19-20). Since it is only as the Son turned toward the Father that the man Jesus can be the authentic exegete of him whom “no one has ever seen” (Jn 1:18,1), it cannot be doubted, says Balthasar, that “when Jesus views his mission, his gaze discerns the Father who is behind it”.²³³ On his side, the Father desires to present himself to Jesus as the archetype who is reflected in his Son’s actions. The incarnate Son’s knowledge of the Father, therefore, is intrinsic to the temporal prolongation of his being-begotten by the Father as his living Image.

In order to enhance the intelligibility of these biblically-founded assertions, Balthasar suggests that we regard the primordial I-Thou relationship between parent and child as an “*imago Trinitatis*”.²³⁴ If anyone should object that in so doing Balthasar is taking “a leap over an abyss”, Balthasar readily replies that “Jesus does not see in this any leap..., but, on the contrary, a direct continuity, for ‘whoever welcomes such a child in my name, welcomes me’ (Mt 18:5)”.²³⁵

²³² See Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery: A Development in Recent Catholic Theology* (Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book, 1997), 81.

²³³ *TD* 3, 168.

²³⁴ *UYB*, 19. (While Balthasar himself does not explicitly utilize the model of the parent-child relationship within the context of his theodramatic theory, elsewhere it serves a foundational role in his trinitarian theology.)

²³⁵ *UYB*, 10.

Inasmuch as every human being is created and called by the Father to be an adopted son in his Beloved, it is Jesus Christ who is the prototypal ground of this “direct continuity” (see Eph 1:3-13; 2:10). If the mystery of the human person is rooted in Christ, the mystery of Christ is inseparable from his identity as Child of God and of man. It is precisely as the one who inaugurates the kingdom of the Father in virtue of his twofold (in nature) filial identity, that Jesus sets a child before his disciples and assures them that they must regard the disposition of children as a condition for entering the kingdom (cf. Mk 10:15). The Johannine Gospel identifies this filial disposition with being “begotten from above” (Jn 3:3). Only upon this Christological basis and for the purpose of elucidating “God’s triune mystery of childhood”²³⁶ does Balthasar present his own consideration of “the distinct consciousness of children,...the [filial] form of the human spirit”.²³⁷

Balthasar’s analysis of the parent-child relationship focuses on the “original experience” [*Urerfahrung*] in which an infant is awakened to his being a person thanks to the call of love conveyed in his mother’s smile.²³⁸ The mother’s smiling and her total giving of self when comprehended by the infant elicits a mirroring response--the response of the infantine “I” to the address of the parental “Thou”. It is a response evoked and empowered by the mother’s self-disposing. On his side, the infant possesses both self-awareness and self-love (preconditions for the *giving* of self) only through an encounter with a “Thou” whose love he need first receive. Since the infantine self-surrender is engendered in the knowledge of the parental gift of self, to behold

²³⁶ UYB, 64.

²³⁷ UYB, 12. In *GL* 7, 439, Balthasar makes the point that only “the ‘I-Thou’ of the Father and the Son within the Godhead” can ground “the eschatological extension of this to every human ‘Thou’”, so that “each individual who can be addressed humanly as ‘Thou’ is raised to the status of a ‘Thou’ for God”. Consequently, it is only on the basis of the inner-trinitarian “I-Thou” that the Christian can regard the “Thou” of his human brother as of absolute value, and can express his love for the divine, Absolute “Thou” by loving his neighbor. “I tell you solemnly, insofar as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40).

²³⁸ See “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 13-14. The principle ideas of this extensive essay can also be found condensed and summarized in chapter 2 (“The Human Child”) of UYB, 15-25. Balthasar’s analysis of the essential dynamic of interpersonal love is echoed by Viktor Frankl, *The Will to Meaning* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 11-12: “As a matter of fact, if self-understanding is to be reached, it has to be mediated by encounter. In other

infantile gestures of love is to see therein the form and measure of parental love at work. Within the context of an I-Thou relation of authentic interpersonal love, the child's capacity to give himself points back to the love he has first been shown.²³⁹

Now the capacity to give himself in love which *Jesus* demonstrates is "to the end" [*eis telos*] (Jn 13:1), indicating a self-giving that has attained its most perfect and definitive expression. In the condition of a human life, the definitiveness and finality of a self-disposing that gathers up and expresses the totality of the person must include the moment of death. As Roch Kereszty rightly remarks: "[O]nly on the Cross does [Jesus] live out and express the full depth of the Son's love for the Father, with the finality that only a freely accepted death can give to love in human life."²⁴⁰ Surely such an utterly exhaustive giving of self can be characterized as a kenosis, a self-emptying in love. Yet inasmuch as it is a *filial* self-emptying, it is a responsive action engendered by the Father. "When [paternal] love calls in giving the power to respond", says Balthasar, "the [filial] 'I' is touched at his heart...[and is enabled thereby to answer] with his totality."²⁴¹ Of its essence this call can only be the Father's self-giving-over: love that is a communication of the personal core of the one who calls. In fine, what is suggested here is a paternal kenosis without remainder as the generative source of the Son doing likewise to the extreme of dying on the Cross.

words, Freud's statement, 'where id is, ego should be', could be enlarged: Where id is, ego should be; *but the ego can become an ego only through a Thou.*" Italics are Frankl's.

²³⁹ According to J. Ratzinger, *To Look on Christ*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 83-84: "Love denotes an act of fundamental assent to another, a 'yes' to the person towards whom the love is directed: 'it is good that you exist,' is Joseph Pieper's striking definition of the nature of love. The lover...says 'yes' to this [the beloved's] existence and confirms it....In order to be able to live, human beings need this affirmation. Biological birth is not enough: man can only accept his personality, his 'I', in the power of the approval of his being that comes from another, from 'you'. This 'yes' of the one who loves him imparts his existence to him in a new and definitive way. In this he receives a kind of rebirth without which his actual birth would remain incomplete and leave him in conflict with himself. In order to find the validity of this statement confirmed one needs only think of the lives of people who have been abandoned by their parents in the first months of their existence and have not been taken up by a love that affirms and embraces their lives. It is only rebirth in being loved that completes birth and opens up for men and women the space of meaningful existence."

²⁴⁰ Roch Kereszty, O. Cist., *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology* (New York: Alba House, 1991), 318.

²⁴¹ "Bewegung zu Gott", *op. cit.*, 13-14. We are justified in applying these descriptions to the relationship between the First and Second Persons of the Trinity, since later in this essay Balthasar speaks of the triune God as

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you” (Jn 15:9). For Balthasar, it is the Father’s love alone that ultimately accounts for the love that informs Jesus’ entire mission. “Seeing” the Father’s mode of divine love by the light of the Spirit of his mission, Jesus deems it as “the object of infinite amazement, wonderment and gratitude”.²⁴² For its part, says Balthasar, this economic amazement “derives from a much deeper amazement of the eternal Child who, in the absolute Spirit of Love, marvels at [generative] Love itself...’The Father is greater’”.²⁴³

Employing the dialogical dynamic of interpersonal love as an illustrative model of the patrogen(n)etic dynamic between the Sender and the One Sent also aids Balthasar in elucidating the event of Jesus’ baptism, when the Son receives the words of his heavenly Father: “You are my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on you” (Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22). This profession of the Father’s love and affirmation is “the word that sends the Son forth into his public ministry”,²⁴⁴ and hence can be regarded as an utterance generative of the Son’s correspondence. The intersubjective dynamic between the Father and Jesus as it is suggested here has a creaturely echo in the parent-child relationship. Integral to the generative power of parental love is its affirmation of the child; the child knows experientially “this truth”: that he (in his innermost “I”) is loved, that he is therefore loveable, and that by virtue of this parental affirmation he is rendered able-to-love (*love-able*).²⁴⁵ As one who receives the gift of the (parental) Thou, the child experiences at the same time the gift--so precious--that he himself is. And on this account the child is enabled to dispose of himself as a

“personal love and relation, as the paternal principle who gives himself; as the engendered, awakened, and answering Son; and as the common Spirit of love” (39-40). My translation.

²⁴² UYB, 45: “[W]hen the Father hands over everything to the Son, this ‘everything’ includes the Father’s freedom. And precisely this handing-over is the object of infinite amazement, wonderment and gratitude.”

²⁴³ UYB, 46. Balthasar continues: “[T]his comparative remains the locus where he abides since it signifies far more than the positive ‘great’, but also much more than the superlative ‘the greatest’, which would signal that an unsurpassable limit has been reached. The comparative is the linguistic form of amazement.”

²⁴⁴ UYB, 34.

²⁴⁵ In his *Principles of Catholic Theology*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 79-80, Ratzinger expresses similar thoughts about the provenance of self-love: “Of ourselves we cannot come to terms with ourselves. Our ‘I’ becomes acceptable to us only if it has first become acceptable to another ‘I’. We can love ourselves only if we have

gift in return.²⁴⁶ Such an affirmation bespeaks a parental *fiat*, if you will: “Let there be an other, beloved to me, whose self-gift I will to elicit, and thus vis-à-vis whom I give myself in openness, availability, and receptivity unto the engendering of a return of love.” Only such an initiatory fiat can engender its counterpart: a filial fiat in the form of obedience—which in the case of the incarnate Son extends to his self-sacrificial death (Jn 15:9; Heb 5:8-9).²⁴⁷

In sum: Balthasar’s analysis of the primordial relationship between parent and child, and its application to the economy of Jesus Christ, has afforded Balthasar opportunity for deepening theological speculation concerning the patrogen(n)etic dynamic played out between the Father and the incarnate Son. It explains why, for him, Jesus surely “retained all the traits of the Child of God even as he was entrusted with the difficult, superhuman task of leading the whole world back to God”.²⁴⁸ Indeed,

the whole tragedy of the Cross...possesses its permanent foundation in God’s triune mystery of childhood. To be a Child of the Father, then, holds primacy over the whole drama of salvation since it is what leads the Son of God from his human childhood through his public ministry and rejection by man, all the way to his high-priestly office on the Cross....This primacy of trinitarian Childhood over the work of redemption clearly signifies that the total redemptive deed with its emphatically “adult” earnestness *can*, in the last analysis, *be accomplished only by virtue of the childlike stance of the God-Man*....[Thus we are directed to] look for the presence of the Father in the Son (“Whoever sees me sees the Father”),...[in the Son who] represents unsurpassably for us the Father’s paternal qualities.²⁴⁹

first been loved by someone else....It is only when life has been accepted and is perceived as accepted that it becomes also acceptable”...and hence, in turn, give-able.

²⁴⁶ “Nonetheless, the mother holds herself before her infant as before an inconceivable miracle: she has without doubt received and borne a seed, but how could she be the author responsible for the eternal, spiritual person who contemplates her through the eyes of a new being? Her infant belongs to her, yet is not her work but the work of God. This is why the love that she has for the infant and the love to which she calls him are, at the same time, her own love and nonetheless not her property but a kind of readiness bestowed by the true possessor of all love”; “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 27. My translation.

²⁴⁷ “Obedience”, says Balthasar, “is the immediate response to the fostering source”; *UYB*, 22.

²⁴⁸ *UYB*, 44. This assertion is echoed on p. 33: As the one whose self-consciousness coincides with his mission to do the Father’s work, “precisely this shows to what extent he [Christ] remains a child even as an adult”. And again on p. 61: Jesus accomplishes his task “in the spirit of childhood”.

²⁴⁹ *UYB*, 63-4. Emphasis mine. Also *ibid.*, 74: “The Son first had to be the Child of the Father in order then to become man and be capable of taking upon his shoulders the burden of a guilty world.” “In this way he has ‘explained’ to us the God who is hidden to all as the only one who knows him out of an eternal experience”; *ibid.*, 58.

E. The filial freedom of Jesus in relation to the Father

We intend here only briefly and by way of anticipation to underline the “dramatic” context in which the incarnate Son receives and corresponds to the Father’s self-giving in his mission; for it will provide important revelatory foundations to a doctrine of the inner trinitarian Fatherhood of God as well as prove critically significant in regard to the crux of the theo-drama of salvation history itself. This “dramatic” context has its condition of possibility in the personal freedom of Jesus over against the personal freedom of the Father, or to put it another way, in the personal mode of filial self-disposing in relation to that of the Father.

E.1. Filial freedom as obedience

While in the preceding we stressed that Jesus acts in and by the Father’s love, conscious that the Father is at work in him (Jn 14:10), yet Jesus knows that he “also performs his own, filial works: *he* does his Father’s works (Jn 10:37), *he* gives himself up in love for the many and for each individual (Gal 2:20); *he* gives himself away in his Eucharist”.²⁵⁰ In his consciousness of mission, Jesus is aware that his being sent by the Father requires of him a self-investment in personal responsibility vis-à-vis the Father’s will.²⁵¹ To be sure, it is the Father-Author who by his economic generative activity determines the form and end of the Son’s mission,²⁵² and it is the Father who is ultimately responsible for--as the one who ultimately disposes of--the Son’s mission within the entire context of God’s theodramatic involvement in world history.²⁵³ At the same time and by virtue of the same generative activity the Father gives over to the Son an “area” for

²⁵⁰ *TD* 3, 519.

²⁵¹ See *TD* 3, 168, 171. In addition, *TD* 3, 225: While aware of the ‘must’ or ‘*dei*’ of his mission (see Lk 2:49; 13:14; Jn 9:4; Mt 16:21), “simultaneously, however, he reveals his own supremely free decision, his resolute freedom to live for his mission”.

²⁵² See *TD* 3, 110-11.

²⁵³ See *TD* 3, 39, 111, 160, 532.

collaborating activity, in which “area” the Son is left-free or let-be vis-à-vis the Father’s work.²⁵⁴ Metaphorically speaking, just as the playwright leaves room in his work for the actor to interpret the role, so the Father leaves Jesus the “space” for a personal exercise of freedom in performing the mission. The Son-Actor is not a “slave” of the Father’s “text.”²⁵⁵ Rather, “he knows that he has identified himself in complete inner freedom with the task that has been *given* to him.”²⁵⁶ But as the One who is sent, the freedom of his self-disposing in mission is always and primarily freedom in the personal mode of receiving and corresponding to the origination self-disposing of the One who sends him. It is thus a freedom of self-disposing as a turning toward the Father who entrusts his eschatological task to the Son, summoning the Son to accomplish it--yes, from the Father and in the Father, but also *for* the Father--returning creation (in himself) *to* the Father at his mission’s climax (Jn 19:30).²⁵⁷

This means in effect that Jesus’ consciousness of his personal freedom in mission coincides with his consciousness of the Father’s call to total *obedience*. That is, his freedom is constituted precisely as an obediential freedom over against the Father’s act of sending. (This is in accord with the witness of the New Testament, where the human modality of Jesus’ personal freedom in mission is clearly summed up as obedience: Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8-9.) As such, it can be identified with Jesus’ perfect *disponibilité* to the generative activity of the Father.²⁵⁸ Consequently, Balthasar uses the terms “obedience” [*Gehorsam*], “readiness” [*Bereitschaft*], “availability” [*Verfügbarkeit*] and “*disponibilité*” interchangeably in reference to the incarnate Son’s personal mode of self-disposing. He speaks of Jesus’ “unlimited divine and human readiness for all that the Father desires of

²⁵⁴ See TD 1, 279-80, 284; TD2, 262, 267; TD 3, 198, 532-34; WEL, 80; UYB, 64-5.

²⁵⁵ See TD 3, 532.

²⁵⁶ TD 3, 183.

²⁵⁷ See TD 3, 39, 172, 256, 519, 534.

²⁵⁸ See TD 3, 183, 520, 522, 532-533.

him...[he] is entirely at the Father's disposal".²⁵⁹ He remarks that "in virtue of his absolute obedience Jesus identified himself with what God expected of him".²⁶⁰ He asserts that Jesus' "Yes to the Father...at the divine level [is] now transformed into an indifference that is ready to embrace whatever the Father wills. The Son's availability...leaves the Father complete freedom to take any direction he wishes and is ready to accept it as the direct, newest expression of his will."²⁶¹ Indeed, in the Spirit of his mission, Jesus prays "to be able to receive the Father's will--or, what is the same thing, the Father's mission"--in total *disponibilité*,²⁶² in a filial obedience which of its nature is an unlimited self-handing-over to the Father. For Balthasar, the genuineness of Jesus' freedom precisely as obedience is evidenced both by his capacity for a kenotic self-giving that is without reserve and by the fact that "this handing-over of himself is no mere passivity but a form of action which, humanly speaking, demands of the subject more self-possession and initiative than the pursuance of self-imposed precepts and goals".²⁶³

It may prove helpful to make explicit why Balthasar, in speaking of the freedom of Jesus Christ, lays stress upon its *filial* mode rather than upon the distinction between Jesus' infinite divine freedom and his finite human freedom²⁶⁴--indeed, why it is that Balthasar is comfortable referring simply to the "obediential" filial freedom of the Son. It is clear from what has been established thus far that in his mission-consciousness, Jesus' disposition of turning toward the Father in response-ability is not restricted to his human freedom. In the incarnation of the Son, his finite human freedom is assumed into the distinct hypostatic mode of filial self-disposing (infinite and eternal) that is the divine Son in his relation to the Father in the triune Godhead. Indeed, we

²⁵⁹ TD 3, 39. The German original refers to the Son as the One entirely disposed of [*der Allverfügte*] in relation to the Father who is the All-disposing One [*der Allverfügenden*]. See also TD 2, 267.

²⁶⁰ TD 3, 160.

²⁶¹ TD 3, 522.

²⁶² TD 3, 522.

²⁶³ TD 3, 186.

²⁶⁴ See, for example, TD 3, 168.

have seen (in Section D.3.) that the Father's limitless self-giving-over whereby he eternally *begets* the Son as his consubstantial Image *coincides* with the Son's perfect *reciprocation*. Since this divine filial correspondence is thus absolutely constitutive of the Person of the Son, and since in the temporal mission of the Son "his created nature is drawn into the eternal act of generation",²⁶⁵ it follows that the created freedom of Jesus is drawn into the eternal correspondence of the Son to the Father and thus the human modality of Jesus' self-giving in mission will be revelatory of the inner-divine self-disposing identical with his Person.²⁶⁶ (Here, approaching "from above" the historical free activity of Jesus, we arrive at confirmation of the identity of his Person and mission, of his "I" and his free self-disposing as the One sent from the Father. Jesus Christ *is* his coming forth from the Father as the one summoned to totally identify himself in collaboration with the work of the Father.)²⁶⁷ Hence, if the intimate relationship between the One sent and the paternal Origin takes the form of obedience vis-à-vis the act of sending, it must mean that "absolute obedience can become the economic form of the Son's absolute [immanent] response to the Father".²⁶⁸ This alone explains Balthasar's assertion that since "in the Son of Man there appears...the inner-trinitarian event of his procession", then "he must already be obedient even as God, and his human obedience

²⁶⁵ *W&R2*, 43.

²⁶⁶ *TD 3*, 199: "[T]he incarnate Son, in his freedom (which is now a human freedom too), does not embrace his own will as God but primarily the Father's will, to which he has always consented." François-Marie Léthel articulates the same insight as found in the theology of Maximus the Confessor: "[O]béissant *au Père*, est importante car elle montre que l'accord entre les deux volontés du Fils est vécu dans sa relation au Père, et non pas dans une relation entre lui-même comme homme et lui-même comme Dieu. En tant qu'homme, le Fils obéit au Père et non pas à lui-même, bien que la volonté du Père soit également celle qu'il possède comme Dieu. [See St. Thomas, *S. Th.* IIIa, q. 20, a. 2.] L'obéissance exprime exactement du point de vue de la volonté humaine le rapport entre des Personnes." F.-M. Léthel, *Théologie de L'Agonie du Christ: La Liberté Humaine du Fils de Dieu et Son Importance Sotériologique Mises en Lumière par St. Maxime le Confesseur* (Éditions Beauchesne, Paris, 1979), 99. See also *WEL*, 173, 239-40; *TD 3*, 51, 458; *TD III* (G.O.), 311.

²⁶⁷ See *TD 3*, 168-71.

²⁶⁸ *TD 3*, 530. So it is that "in the economy of salvation, the loving readiness of the Son toward the Father empties itself out in obedience (which, however, is not an estrangement of this loving readiness but only its metamorphosis into a soteriological form)"; *Rdr*, 181. In addition, *WEL*, 147: "[T]he Letter to the Hebrews speaks with deliberate paradox ("although") of *learning* obedience--viewing it from the perspective of the eternal Son of the Father, whose essence it is to be infinitely ready to submit fully to the Father's will (Heb 5:7-9)." Also see *TD 3*, 22, 187; and *TD 2*, 267.

unto death must be the epiphany of a divine--that is, a trinitarian--obedience".²⁶⁹ Let us permit Balthasar to qualify his own statement:

The application of the concept of obedience to the divine Person is, of course, a figure of speech--an anthropomorphism. But, in the final analysis, all human speech about God is anthropomorphic,²⁷⁰ and this figure has been made definitive and proper by the incarnation of the Son (Phil 2:7). In applying it, everything is to be excluded from the concept of obedience that derives from the relationship between God and the creature insofar as the creature is regarded *qua* creature, that is, as having its origin in nothingness. Everything is to be retained, on the other hand, and translated into the infinite (in the sense of the *via eminentiae*) that pertains to the analogy between God and the creature as the positive image of God, or more properly, of the Trinity. The obedience of which the Son of God gave us an example in his human nature is by no means merely something that is grounded in his human nature....Like all his utterances, it is not only borne by his divine Person; it is also a positive revelation of his divine Person--and hence of his divine nature--translated into human terms.²⁷¹

In a word, Balthasar is proposing what can be called a Christological analogy of being.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ *GL* 1, 479. See also Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, sec. 59, transl. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 185ff., 203. (Original edition: *Kirchliche Dogmatik* IV/1, Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1953, pp. 202ff. Henceforth, *KD*.)

²⁷⁰ As W. Kasper acknowledges: "It is not possible for us human beings to speak of the mystery of God except by using human images and likenesses"; *GJC*, 214-15.

²⁷¹ *CSL*, 78. Medard Kehl remarks in his introduction to Balthasar's *Credo*, 11: "in obedience the Son's inner-trinitarian essence expresses itself in an appropriately creaturely way. As love that continually receives itself from the Father and owes itself to him, he also always accepts, with 'full consent', his being sent to the world.... Freely consenting obedience, as the form of creaturely freedom and love that is appropriate to the eternal Son, will thenceforth stamp the whole path of the earthly Jesus and of those who follow after him." See *TD* 3, 191; *MH*, 69; *GL* 7, 214-15; *Rdr*, 181; and *Credo*, 45-6. Also Wm. Hill, *op. cit.*, 16-17.

Christian obedience, then, has its ground in the divine freedom of the Son. By the grace conferred through Christ, our obedience is a participation in the Son's own divinely free self-disposing in relation to the Father. It is, therefore, the mode of freedom in which we are divinized, born of the Father together with Christ into "the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). This understanding of (graced) obedience is in sharp contrast to the modern mentality which, when considering the nature of obedience "from without", restricts it to an exploitive and degrading condition, or when regarding it "from within" the obedient subject, views it as a symptom of neurosis offering relief from the burden of self-responsibility. Freedom, for its part, is defined as absolute autonomy, a condition of being answerable to no other, of corresponding to no other, of complete emancipation from any form of dependence on an other. When this notion of freedom is wedded to the desire to be grounded in the Absolute, it professes a mono-dimensional or mono-logical structure of (literally) self-divinization through self-devising or self-concocting, as it were. See Balthasar's comments in *TD* III (G.O.), 305-6; *WEL*, 267-68; and *Credo*, 46-7.

²⁷² G.F. O'Hanlon states the following in support of Balthasar's Christological analogy of being: "Balthasar has identified and developed the similarity, within dissimilarity, of the created and divine spheres in their analogous relationship (revealed primarily in Christ) in such a way that...he avoids the appearance (common in other approaches) of a 'split' in God, whether between God in himself and God in the other, or between the immanent and the economic realms, or between the divine and human natures in Christ, while being able to maintain the distinction proper to the divine transcendence." O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 170.

Clarification may be called for regarding Balthasar phrase: “and hence of his divine nature”. The divine nature *of the Son* is precisely the nature he possesses as given over to him in consubstantial fullness from the Father’s generative act. That is, the Son does not possess the divine nature as a kind of neutral, non-defined, non-relational reality at his autonomous disposal. (This will be clarified in Part Two.)²⁷³ Rather, his divine nature with its freedom is constituted from eternity as trinitarian, and as Son the distinct personal intentionality which he exercises in this triune freedom is always as the Only Begotten of the Father--as the Person who exercises *filial* freedom or self-disposing in relation to the Father in the Spirit. We find ourselves referring once again to the distinction which arguably represents the most critical in Balthasar’s theological project, namely, the *trinitarian* distinction within God, for the latter is to Balthasar’s mind the ontic basis of the divine/human ‘essentialist’ distinction.²⁷⁴ In this case, our application concerns the freedom(s) of the incarnate Son: “Of his very *essence* he reveals God, but he does so *in the personal mode*”.²⁷⁵

It remains for us to indicate, however, how it is that the attitude of *obedience* in Jesus serves not only as the perfect human transparency of his divine Person—”and hence of his divine nature” in its personal (filial) mode--as the consubstantial Son of the Father, but inasmuch as this disposition is the temporal translation in his human self-consciousness of his eternal relationship

²⁷³ For now let it suffice to remark that, as the nature of the Godhead is itself trinitarian in form--i.e., “in the Trinity of God” that *is* God’s very essence “there are sequence and order, there is relationship and therefore form” (*GL* 7, 22)--so the divine nature of the Son is of trinitarian constitution and, inasmuch as we regard it from the locus of his distinct hypostatic mode of self-disposing within the proper sequence and order of the trinitarian Godhead, we can speak of the divine nature of the Son as filial in “form”. Likewise, Balthasar speaks of “the particular ‘essence’, the inmost nature and disposition of the Father” (*Prayer*, 148).

²⁷⁴ See, for example, *GL* 1, 613; and *W&R2*, 43-4. Similarly, W. Kasper (*GJC*, 171) is a proponent of “a new christological starting point” in which “we no longer start, like the two-nature christology of Chalcedon, with the question of the relation between the human and divine natures in Jesus Christ; rather, we see the two-nature doctrine as indirectly and in its substance grounded in the relationship of Jesus to his Father. In his being as Son [*Sohnsein*] Jesus has his radical origin in God....The turning of Jesus to the Father [*Hinwendung*] implies the prior turning of the Father to Jesus [*Zuwendung*]....The subsequent Son-christology is therefore simply the interpretation and translation of what is secretly present in Jesus’ obedience as Son and in his self-surrender as Son.” This christological starting point enables Kasper in his turn to speak of the inner-divine and eternal obedience of the Son: see *ibid.*, 176, 290, 309.

with the One who begets him, we need also indicate how it is that Jesus' obediential freedom serves to "show us the Father" (Jn 14:8).²⁷⁶

E.2. The obediential freedom of Jesus images the generative freedom of the Father

We begin by reiterating that the obediential self-disposing of the One who is sent cannot be ultimately originitive but is primarily receptive. As such it points back to the One who is the source of the mission, who is the original determinator of the mission's form and goal/*telos*. Furthermore, we have already indicated that Jesus' filial self-disposing as turning towards the Father to receive everything from him and to correspond in everything to him is the manner in which the incarnate Son makes manifest his oneness with the Father.²⁷⁷ Such an obediential self-disposing "means that...he has handed himself over to Another",²⁷⁸ has made himself completely available to the Father's work of begetting him as his "perfect copy" (Heb 1:3). Thus, for Balthasar to say that the incarnate Son's *disponibilité* to the Father in his passion and death is "the decisive act of the love of the Son, who translates his being begotten by the Father...into the expressive form of creaturely obedience",²⁷⁹ must mean that the love of the Son, *precisely because it is obediential*, does not express primarily his own filial love but rather glorifies the love that is the Father's. "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you" (Jn 15:9); *as* the Father loves the Son, *so* the Son reciprocates in love of the Father and of the world, "*because and as* the Father loves".²⁸⁰ This is why the task which the Father has given Jesus--"that of expressing God's Fatherhood through his

²⁷⁵ TD 3, 225.

²⁷⁶ ITC, "The Consciousness of Christ Concerning Himself and His Mission" (1985), 2.4., p. 310: "His [Jesus'] human consciousness of mission 'translates', so to speak, the eternal relationship with the Father into the idiom of human life." See Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Bible et Christologie*, n. 2.2.1.3 (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 93-95.

²⁷⁷ Recall Section D with its excursus. Pertinent here is Balthasar's remark that "the concluding verse [of the Good Shepherd discourse] must be understood from the perspective of the unity of the Father's mission and the Son's acquiescence: 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30)"; WEL, 240. See also CSL, 78; FF, 27; and TD 3, 169, 183.

²⁷⁸ TD 3, 183. See also TD 3, 39, 110-11, 154, 160, 166, 186.

²⁷⁹ GL 7, 214. Emphasis mine.

²⁸⁰ NE, 235. Emphasis mine.

entire being, through his life and death in and for the world”²⁸¹--can be accomplished solely by the One of unconditional obedience. Only the One whose “I” absolutely coincides with his self-abandonment to the eschatological “all” of the Father’s love (which brings him to the paschal event) can be the exact interpretation of the Fatherhood of God.

E.2.1. *Jesus’ obedience as self-handing-over and its paternal archetype*

Let us look yet more closely at the obediential freedom of Jesus as integral to his filial relation of imaging the One who sends him, in order to draw out further implications to support “from below” Balthasar’s exposition of the intra-trinitarian Father. We have noted that the obedience which Jesus manifests in his mission “means that...he has handed himself over to Another”.²⁸² Nonetheless, it remains true that Jesus’ obediential self-abandonment to the Father entails an *assent* to the Father’s act of sending. “Jesus”, says Balthasar, “obediently *allows* the Father to perform his fatherly works in him”.²⁸³ Now if we admit that what the Father “does” is the Son himself,²⁸⁴ then the Father’s calling Jesus to consent to placing himself at the Father’s disposal, far from being an intrusive and foreign demand upon him, summons Jesus to be fully himself...and (in consent) freely himself. This is why “it is precisely in embracing his Father’s will that Jesus discovers his own, most profound identity” as the Son.²⁸⁵ It also explains why Jesus’ *freedom* coincides with both his Person and his mission, and hence is distinctively *filial* freedom.²⁸⁶

Furthermore, if the Father on his side “makes space” for the Son’s self-disposing as man, this suggests that the Father is summoning the Son to allow God’s paternal work to be

²⁸¹ *TD* 3, 172.

²⁸² *TD* 3, 183.

²⁸³ *TD* 3, 519. Emphasis mine. And *WEL*, 154: “[W]hat Jesus does is permit the Father to work in him.”

²⁸⁴ *TD* 2, 267.

²⁸⁵ *TD* 3, 199-200. In addition, *TD* 3, 169: “[T]he more the Son unites himself [in self-disposing] with the Ground from which both his Person and mission simultaneously spring forth, the better he understands both his mission and himself.”

accomplished in him. Such a paternal summons paradoxically entails a note of self-determined “powerlessness”. For once we admit that the Person of the Father *is* his act of begetting the Son, and that the Father’s sending the Son is the economic form of his inner-divine generative act that eternally constitutes his Person, then if the Father hands over his fatherly work to the free assent of the incarnate Son, this means that the Father in some way delivers over *himself* to the One whom he sends. And consequently, Jesus’ consent to his mission from the Father involves, not only a Yes to who he is as Son, but--inseparably--an economic consent to the very Person of the Father. In obediently allowing the Father to perform his fatherly works in him, Jesus allows the Father to beget him in the temporal modality of his mission, and hence allows the Father to work economically as Father unto the eschatological accomplishment of his creative-salvific work for the world. Accordingly, the very obedience of Jesus in its properly filial form of handing himself over to the Father is in effect an *imaging* witness to the Father, whose personal initiative in sending the Son coincides with his handing himself over to (and in) the One he sends.²⁸⁷

Following Balthasar, it is possible to arrive at the central point of this section by taking a short-cut via the Johannine Gospel. Inasmuch as Jesus is aware that the Father has put everything into his hands (Jn 13:3)--this “everything” meaning all that the Father does (Jn 5:19-20)--Jesus knows that the Father is he who always already hands himself over to the Son in his very sending of the Son. And since the Father shows the Son all that he himself does “originally” that the Son may do likewise (Jn 5:19-20), this paternal showing of himself as the primal Origin of self-surrendering love is one with the Father’s summoning Jesus to a perfect reciprocity. Hence the Father’s calling Jesus to place himself entirely at the Father’s disposal is integral to begetting his perfect

²⁸⁶ TD 3, 225: “Jesus’ personal freedom is identical with his mission [*Sendung*].” And TD 3, 168: “[T]he mission [*Sendung*] itself...coincides with his filial freedom.” See also TD 3, 154.

²⁸⁷ See TD 3, 532-34.

revelatory image in the human freedom of Jesus, since it is the Father who “first” entrusts his economic work as Father—and thereby delivers himself up—to the incarnate Son’s free disposal.²⁸⁸

*E.2.2 The gift that is filial freedom carries a summons to affirm and thus to deem
the giving that is paternal freedom*

These remarks warrant our pausing to consider the theo-drama unfolding between the Father and the incarnate Son with respect to their mutual “disposal” of the Other who hands himself over.

Inasmuch as Jesus knows that he *is* the One sent, and thus offers himself entirely to the Father for the mission’s accomplishment, we can affirm an “identity in Jesus between his I-consciousness and his mission-consciousness, or (*what comes to the same thing*) Jesus’ consent to the Father’s wish to send him, the coincidence of his fundamental free will with that of the Father”.²⁸⁹ In Jesus, Person and mission (themselves identical) coincide with his filial freedom as self-surrender to the Father.²⁹⁰ Now if Jesus is conscious that his self-disposing in mission remains (receptively) inseparable from the Father (“the Son can do nothing of himself”; Jn 5:19; cf. 8:28), it must be that he is conscious of his filial freedom precisely as such. Indeed, if Jesus experiences both Person and mission “as springing in unity from the source that is the Father” while being granted a distinct filial mode of existence (Jn 5:26), then he likewise knows that his autonomy is given him from the Father.²⁹¹ “What the Father gives is the capacity to be a self, freedom, and thus

²⁸⁸ Since what is revealed through the economic activity of the trinitarian God is his inner-divine activity, our use of the word “first” in this context refers to an ontological and theo-logical priority (given the nonreversible order of the eternal trinitarian processions) rather than to a temporal priority (proper to the essential and relational activity of creaturely being). See chapter III.

²⁸⁹ *TD* 3, 187. Emphasis mine. See also *TD* 3, 169.

²⁹⁰ *TD* 3, 51: “The mission is constitutive of the person as such.” Recall *TD* 3, 168: “[T]he mission itself...coincides with his filial freedom.” See also *TD* 3, 225.

²⁹¹ *TD* 3, 169: “Both [Person and mission] are experienced as springing in unity from the source that is the Father; both owe their existence to him and give him thanks for the ‘autonomy’ they have been given. ‘For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself’ (Jn 5:26).” See *GL* 1, 613; *TD* 2, 87.

autonomy.”²⁹² The Father, for his part, must be free if he is to endow with autonomy the One he sends. Accordingly, when Jesus in his mission-consciousness discerns the Father who shows him his paternal self-disposing (Jn 5:20), what Jesus knows of the Father is precisely the Father’s personal mode of freedom as the One who sends.²⁹³ In the filial freedom whereby Jesus affirms his mission, he simultaneously affirms the paternal freedom of the Sender. His obediential assent to the Father’s will is thus the perfect echo of the One who has “first” uttered his paternal (i.e., generative) Yes to the Son’s personal liberty.

Given that Jesus, in the filial freedom which he receives as one with his mission, is called to affirm God’s freedom as Father in relation to him, then in his mission-consciousness Jesus knows and experiences the Father’s freedom as it is expressed and defined by the Father’s manner of self-giving in his sending of the Son. That is to say, the freedom of the Father is not proffered the incarnate Son for his filial consent, is not shown the Son for his economic imaging reciprocation, other than as its self-constituted form or mode of paternal kenosis. Hence for Jesus to assent to the Father’s freedom is for Jesus to assent to *this kind* of Father, so to speak, this way of being God -- while for the Father it means that his delivering himself over to the incarnate Son’s free disposal (in his sending of the Son as the personal locus of his economic act as Father) involves at the same time his handing himself over to the Son’s *deeming* of his paternal form.²⁹⁴ Now this filial deeming assuredly does not judge the form of the Father’s self-disposing in a determinative sense, but is rather to be understood as an aspect of filial receptivity. The freedom that the Son receives in being sent (and by which he deems the self-disposing of the Father-Sender) is always already given as the power to answer paternal love with filial love; it is “an autonomy which can be understood

²⁹² UYB, 44.

²⁹³ See TD 3, 168 and UYB, 45.

²⁹⁴ We use the notion ‘to deem’ (see Phil 2:6) in anticipation of Balthasar’s re-reading of Phil 2:6-11.

only as a surrender of self to the other”.²⁹⁵ In short: the incarnate Son’s deeming in freedom of the Father-Sender coincides with his being begotten “economically” by the Father. To the incarnate Son the distinct form of the Father’s self-abandonment appears both as the absolutely unappealable²⁹⁶ and as the absolutely appealing²⁹⁷ freedom of the Primal Lover. At all events, it presents itself to Jesus as a free appeal that incites in him a total assenting correspondence.

E.3. Paternal dependence, receptivity, and self-exposure vis-à-vis Jesus’ filial freedom

Casting light on the freedom of the One Sent enables Balthasar to perceive the dramatic quality of God the Father’s involvement in the mission of the Son. From here we gain a vantage point which illumines the ever-deepening mystery of how such properly filial modalities of Jesus’ obediential freedom as his dependence on the Father, his receptivity to the Father, and his self-exposure (his self-handing-over or *disponibilité*) to the Father’s disposal are themselves integral to Jesus’ mission of revealing the Father.

Regarding this mystery, the theological perspective that comes most quickly and clearly to the foreground recognizes that it is by Jesus’ obediential act of allowing the Father to work in him that Jesus is the personal locus of the Father’s self-expression or self-representation to the world.²⁹⁸ Balthasar describes this consenting allowance elsewhere as Jesus’ “making space” for the Father’s love:

By making space for the Father, the Son becomes his Word in the exactness of the one who only reproduces what has been said to him....[I]n the sphere of this [filial] love, there is seen directly the absolute love of the Father--for the Son and for the world....In the one who makes space, in his whole conduct, one can *see* what fills

²⁹⁵ *UYB*, 44.

²⁹⁶ That is, the archetypal mode of freedom whose generative nature defines and forms the freedom it begets.

²⁹⁷ That is, the freedom whose self-disposing as the alpha of love is the omega toward whom begotten freedom turns, deeming it as the “highest good”. See *UYB*, 44-6.

²⁹⁸ *Rdr*, 181: “The Son allows himself to be directed as...the incarnate One who now stands over against the Father. This representation of the Father..., proceeding from him but primarily presenting him objectively, is the consequence of and correspondence to the (kenotically) self-emptying love of the Son for the Father in the mode of human obedience.”

him: the [generative] love of the Father. And the act of making space can itself be seen as love for the Father.²⁹⁹

This explication, however, is susceptible to being viewed one-sidedly in terms of a unilateral Father-Son relation, and needs to be complemented by another which takes more explicit account of the mutuality of self-giving between the Father and the Son: namely, one which considers the distinctively filial dependence, receptivity, and self-exposure inherent in Jesus' "making space" as entailing his responsive mirroring of the Father. We have already seen that the Father, by virtue of his economic generative activity, establishes a relationship in which he is "first" to "make space" for the Son's freedom in mission, allowing the Son his own properly filial allowance or consent (a filial "making space") vis-à-vis the Father in his act of sending. The question which remains to be asked, however, is whether the Father's generative "making space" for, or letting-be of, the Son intrinsically bears the modalities of properly *paternal* dependence on, receptivity to, and self-exposure over against the freedom of the Son in his being sent, such that these modalities of the Father's generative work have their image and counterpart in the Son's mode of "making space". While this question will be discussed throughout our study, let us at least identify several factors within the context of our theodramatic approach to the trinitarian Father which can provide us with a preliminary response.

In what sense does Balthasar speak of a paternal *dependence* vis-à-vis Jesus' filial freedom? Inasmuch as Jesus obediently allows the Father "to perform his fatherly works in him",³⁰⁰ the Father in this respect depends on Jesus' consent (a consent, let us reiterate, that ever proceeds from the Father's generative letting-be) in order for the Father's self-expressive activity—coinciding

²⁹⁹ *GL* 7, 291. Emphasis Balthasar's. And *GL* 7, 380: "The Father is seen...in the emptiness of the Son that is ready for him and in his own self-attestation in this emptied-out space (Jn 5:36f.; 7:16; etc.). [Indeed, what faith discerns in this emptied-out space is ultimately] the original begetting of the Son from the Father."

³⁰⁰ *TD* 3, 519. See *GL* 7, 214.

with his Person--to be consummated in the economic order (Heb 5:8-9; 1:2-3).³⁰¹ For Balthasar, if what the Father does in his temporal sending translates his eternal begetting of the Son, and if the incarnate Son “must fulfill and perfect the Father’s earthly work with the...obedience” of a free self-giving on the Cross,³⁰² then we can consider the Father as dependent on the incarnate Son’s freely answering love in order to attain the consummation of his (economic) work as Father.³⁰³ The Father’s *letting-be* the Son to his filial self-disposing in mission is thus pregnant with the Father’s *letting-go* of his paternal work as the One who sends, leaving himself in this respect in the hands of the One who is sent. Furthermore, since it is precisely in his (economic) action that the Person of the Father reveals himself, we can expect to find this paternal dependence as intrinsic to the Father’s self-revelation in the One he sends. Precisely because the Person of the Father coincides with the “all” of his work, he is fully disclosed only with the accomplishment of his economic generative activity vis-à-vis the *disponibilité* of Jesus “to the end” of his mission (Jn 13:1; 19:30). This means that the Father, in revealing himself to the world, depends upon Jesus’ “*acceptance* of his mission, its *implementation in obedience* right up to its bloody [climax]”.³⁰⁴

The opportunity presents itself to transpose the notion of the Father’s economic dependence in terms that will demonstrate the illuminative capacity of the metaphor of the author-actor relation with which we began our study. Since it is only “as a result of his utter and total performance of his mission” that the Son-Actor perfectly makes present in his dramatic portrayal the self-expressive work of the Father-Author, and thereby realizes the identification of the Father-Author for his audience, we can speak of a paternal-auctorial dependence on the Son-Actor as “the indispensable Person who brings the Author’s text into the actuality of the performance” even as

³⁰¹ See *TD* 2, 267; and *TD* 3, 51, 168, 187, 225, 458.

³⁰² *GL* 1, 619.

³⁰³ See *WEL*, 16, where this assertion is grounded in the eternal ‘immanent’ begetting; and *YCY*, 47, where this assertion is applied to the Father’s salvific work for and in his elect.

“he stands over against it in [the] ‘ethical freedom’” of his interpretive activity.³⁰⁵ For the Son-Actor, this free interpretive activity is identical with his total (kenotic) *disponibilité* in putting himself and all his powers at the service of the role he has been given,³⁰⁶ whereby he serves the Father-Author’s self-expressive fulfillment as generative source of the theo-drama--a source, to be sure, who has always already dispossessed himself in putting all his powers at the service of the mission and in giving over to the Son-Actor the task of interpreting or embodying his paternal self-uttering (wherein lies the Son’s own self-expressive fulfillment).³⁰⁷

Thus it is imperative to recognize that this situation of distinctively paternal-auctorial dependence in relation to the Son-Actor is itself fundamentally initiated and determined by the Father in his generative freedom. Indeed, the Father-Author’s (freely initiated) dependence on the Son-Actor remains inseparable from his primacy in determining or defining the Son’s role or mission. This paternal dependence, therefore, must be understood as one modality of a dialectic of determining/dependence proper to the Father-Author in his relation to the Son-Actor--a dialectic entailing both a determining in generative accompaniment of, and a dependence upon (in withdrawing to make space for), the Son-Actor’s interpretive response. Regarding this paternal dialectic, the determining is primary to the dependence, even while the two coincide in the nature of the Father-Author’s activity vis-à-vis the Son-Actor.

If we shift our point of reference to the Son-Actor, it becomes evident that the Son’s proper dispositions over against the Father are such that they entail a *mirroring* dialectic of dependence/determining. Dependence on the Father’s generative work is primary for the Son-Actor, since the Son does not posit a role or mission for himself but receives both his mission and

³⁰⁴ *TD* 3, 518: “Thus the acceptance of his mission, its implementation in obedience right up to its bloody end, cannot be anything other than the revelation of the Father’s primal, absolute love for his creatures.” Emphasis mine.

³⁰⁵ *TD* 3, 532-33.

³⁰⁶ See *TD* 1, 273, 285, 287, 288, 294; and *TD* 3, 166.

the freedom with which to interpret it as given over to him from the Father-Author. Moreover, the Son-Actor not only receives his mission as “impressed” with the definite form determined by the Father-Author’s self-expression (the Father’s kenotic self-giving-over), but also--and as intrinsically concomitant--his very freedom is given him from the Father as “an autonomy which can be understood only as a surrender of self to the other”.³⁰⁸ Clearly, then, the Father-Author’s dialectic of determining/dependence is *inverted* to a dependence/determining dialectic in the Son-Actor, an inversion due to the hierarchical structure of the Father-Son relation, and played out as a dynamic inter-Personal process integral to the mutual theodramatic activity between them.

We ought to consider, then, the Father’s dependence only as inseparable from, because a self-determined modality of, the originless freedom of his generative self-giving. Insofar as the Father’s act of sending is a prolongation of his unoriginated self-surrender, it is of an unconditioned character that cannot as such be restricted by the filial freedom (both begotten and created) of the One being sent. For assuredly it is the Father who acts in absolute initiative as the One who sends, and whose sending of the Son is precisely his giving over without remainder the “all” of his self-expressive, fatherly work to the Son. (He does not hold anything back, as if needing the Son’s assent for him to act originally in total generative surrender). Indeed, we must affirm that the Father does not depend upon the Son’s response in regard to his (ungenerated) initiating, defining, evoking, enabling, and accompanying activity which is the generative source and “food” of the Son’s self-disposing (Jn 4:34; 6:57; 8:28-29). Nevertheless, since what the Father establishes in his economic begetting is not merely his own unilateral emission of paternal self-giving but an inter-Personal relationship of mutual self-giving between Father and Son, its consummation does call upon the Son to fully correspond in self-giving in and by God’s fathering work, which points to a

³⁰⁷ See *TD* 3, 518-19, 532-34; and *Rdr*, 27.

³⁰⁸ *UYB*, 44.

unique and delimited paternal dependence on--as the (self-positing) “underside” of his engendering of--the Son’s free imaging reciprocation. There are, then, these two distinct modes of personal dependence evident in the theo-dramatic situation of the Son’s mission: (1) the Son (in a primary manner) depends on the Father’s self-donation as the generative source of his own filial (responsive) self-disposing;³⁰⁹ (2) the Father, insofar as he is one with his generative sending--the *telos* of which generative work is the incarnate Son’s loving “to the end” as the Father has loved him--by his absolute initiative makes himself dependent on the Son’s reciprocating self-surrender, even as he ever begets it from his original kenosis of love.³¹⁰

The Father’s free act of “making space” for Jesus’ filial freedom in mission involves, moreover, a distinctively paternal *receptivity* to the Son’s (collaborative) self-disposing over against his act of sending. Indeed, we are confronted with a further dialectic of a properly paternal (generative) *receptivity* to Jesus’ free performing of his mission in the Father’s very *activity* of sending him. For inasmuch as the relation which the Father establishes in his sending of the Son is dialogical, that is to say, is a relation which by virtue of the Father’s determinative self-donation has its consummation in the Son’s (mirroring) self-offering,³¹¹ it follows that the generative activity of the Father-Sender involves the “extension” of his mode of loving to include paternal receptivity to the Son’s free (return) gift of self.³¹² In support of this, let us recall Balthasar’s assertion that Jesus’ self-abandonment *to the Father* is “the decisive act of the love of the Son” who thereby

³⁰⁹ *GL* 7, 250: “[E]ven in the ‘return’...of the Son to the Father...the dependence of the Son upon the Father is never superceded.” See also *GL* 7, 214; and J. Ratzinger, *Intro.*, 133.

³¹⁰ See *WEL*, 15-16. In addition, see Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982), 47-54; also Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), and *The Mystery of Being*, vol. II (Chicago: Regnery, The Gifford Lectures, 1951).

³¹¹ *GL* 7, 245, n.3: We ought to understand Jn 10:18 “where Jesus speaks of an authority ‘to lay down my life and to take it again’...as the ‘power’ of the freedom of love to take on the freedom of obedience--a power bestowed by the Father (7:19ff.), which can be exercised only as the Father intends”. See also *TD* 3, 169.

³¹² See *GL* 7, 245, 248-50, 262; *YCY*, 40, 170, 319; and *WEL*, 16.

“translates his being begotten *by the Father*”.³¹³ While the Father economically *engenders* Jesus’ own proper work, he engenders it precisely *as filial self-disposing vis-à-vis his own*, indeed as filial self-disposing constituted *as “surrender of self to the [paternal] other”*³¹⁴--all of which indicates that what the Father does in sending the Son entails rendering himself receptive to the (begotten) self-giving of the One Sent.

There remains the danger, however, of mistakenly considering the Father’s receptivity as enacted merely “in response to” the Son, as if it followed upon the Son’s correspondence in freedom (as if called forth by the Son’s self-giving). But for Balthasar, the Father’s mode of receptivity is always and only generative in function. The discussion of the I-Thou relation between mother and child as an *imago Trinitatis* (recall the excursus of this chapter) can shed some light on the generative nature and function of the receptivity inherent in the Father’s love for the Beloved. The Father, says Balthasar, endows the One Sent with autonomy precisely vis-à-vis his paternal self-disposing. This endowment conveys a paternal *fiat* with respect to the Son’s exercise of ‘covenantal’ freedom. For Balthasar, the receptivity inherent in the Father’s selfless Yes as an unoriginated and originative *fiat* to the distinct Person of the Son (who *is* his filial self-disposing in mission) is always already actual in the initiatory movement of the Father’s love. As such it is ever at play in engendering the Son’s self-giving, is indeed integral to begetting “its answering coactuation”³¹⁵ in the form of a *filial* receptivity to the primal self-giving of the Father. (An extensive discussion of receptivity as a modality of the Father’s way of being God must wait until Part Two.)

Finally, following Balthasar, we can understand a paternal modality of *self-exposure* over against Jesus’ filial freedom? Given that the Father’s “allowing space” for Jesus’ filial freedom is

³¹³ *GL* 7, 214. Emphasis mine.

³¹⁴ *UYB*, 44. Emphasis mine.

one with his summoning the incarnate Son to consent to and interpret the Father's will in sending (i.e., the Father's free and full self-expressing),³¹⁶ we may consider that the Father delivers over himself to the Son's deeming and decision, and in this sense exposes himself to the (begotten) freedom of the One he sends.³¹⁷ Certainly this paternal mode of self-exposure is closely related to the Father's way of being dependent and receptive vis-à-vis the incarnate Son. For inasmuch as the Father, by his absolute initiative of love, constitutes his "mission to generate" as his establishing of the mutual, 'covenantal' relationship with the Son, he leaves his own economic consummation-in-relation exposed to--as also dependent on and receptive to--the Son's free response.

Here, too, we can transfer our remarks on paternal receptivity and self-exposure to the more strictly dramatic categories. In a manner which resembles the playwright's relation to the actor, the Father's sending of the Son is one with his receptive leaving-free the Son-Actor to interpret his mission or role as it proceeds from the Father's will. Certainly it is from the Father-Author that the mission originally proceeds with a definite form, and it is by the Father-Author that the mission is ultimately disposed of, bringing the drama of salvation history to its final resolution. At the same time, the Father leaves room in his work for a collaborating creativity on the part of the Son-Actor. Moreover, in letting the Son-Actor "be" to conceive and execute the role within the "space" of his own interpreting, the Father is allowing the Son the freedom to deem or judge the Father's self-expressive economic work (one with the Father-Author himself), even while this judgment by the Son of the self-exposed Father is always antecedently delimited and guided by the latter.³¹⁸ Balthasar, moreover, goes on to speak of an expectancy on the part of the Father: in his self-handing-over the Father-Author is expectant of (as also dependent on) the Son-Actor's interpretive

³¹⁵ *Rdr*, 176: "[T]he Father's love...becomes [in the Son] its answering coactuation or realization."

³¹⁶ *WEL*, 233: "The Father's will is the Father himself."

³¹⁷ See *GL* 1, 335; *GL* 7, 73; and *UYB*, 44-7.

response to his economic work, through which alone the Father-Author's self-expression can be fully realized on the stage of the world.³¹⁹

It has been our aim throughout this section to cast light on the profound mystery that the properly filial modalities which are intrinsic to Jesus' obediential freedom--namely, his dependence on the Father, his receptivity to the Father, and his self-exposure (as kenotic *disponibilité*) to the Father's disposal--can be understood as *mirror-images* of their paternal counterparts: the properly origivative and generative modalities of the Father's freedom. When the Father in his free economic work "makes space" or allows for Jesus' free self-disposing, he does so only as concomitantly allowing himself to be dependent on, expectant of, receptive and exposed to, the filial freedom he engenders. And it is this paternal form of freedom that the incarnate Son deems to be the "absolute right", the "highest good", worthy of nothing other than perfect filial imitation.³²⁰ Thus does the Son interpret the Father when in the freedom he receives with his mission (by virtue of the Father's "making space") he corresponds by "making space" for or allowing the Father his generative self-disposing in him, and thereby is (as the Father's image) dependent on, expectant of, receptive and exposed to, the paternal freedom that begets him. It is because the Father is "first" in (economically) delivering himself over to Jesus' deeming or judgment in the "space" of his filial freedom, that the Son can reciprocate this paternal (generative) self-delivering-over in his mission, such that he freely delivers himself over to the judgment of the Father and, in imaging

³¹⁸ *TD* 1, 284: "The actor...must conceive and execute his role [deem and dispose of it] on the basis of a single, unified vision [established by the author]....The actor [is responsible for] the creative effort he makes to enter into and experience the author's vision."

³¹⁹ See *TD* 1, 273, 278. Let us reiterate that we would be wrong to consider the Father-Author's expectancy to be such that he holds himself at a purely passive and impotent distance, as it were, from the Son-Actor's collaboration; rather, it must be that the Father-Author's expectancy is pregnant with his immanently active generative power in the Son-Actor and his freedom. Moreover, this paternal-auctorial self-exposure is carried over to the Father-Author's relation to the audience. See chapter I, section D ("*The Audience*") of this study.

³²⁰ See *UYB*, 44-6; *Rdr*, 180; and *TD* III (G.O.), 303.

representation, also to the judgment of the world. What is emerging into view is a paternal freedom sufficiently all-powerful to be “meek and humble of heart” in its generative self-giving.³²¹

“This is what the Father is like.”...Jesus not only gives us a portrayal of God: he actually lives out God’s attitude toward us in all that he is and does. He does so in his phenomenal sublimity...and at the same time he does in his equally phenomenal humility, patience and humiliation, not only making himself the servant of all but also allowing the most wicked injustice to be perpetrated against him. What terrible things God must continually accept from his creation. He is despised, spat upon, pronounced dead and finished. And let no one think that God does not feel this, that he does not allow it to touch his very heart. “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” Anyone who sees how mankind rejects, mocks, scourges me and nails me to a cross can also see what it does to my divine Father. The high point of Jesus’ interpretation of God is the time...that the Son on the Cross is forsaken....Here, certainly, Jesus is the man who takes away the sin of the world, and God can only turn his face away from the monstrous proportions of this sin. But is this God who has turned his face away not also a forsaken God? “He who has seen me has seen the Father”--he who has seen my forsakenness has seen also the Father’s forsakenness.³²²

E.4. *Jesus’ consent manifests the eternal freedom of the economic Trinity*

In the preceding we have established that in Jesus Christ the identity of mission and Person perfectly coincides with his filial freedom as self-giving vis-à-vis the Father who sends him. This bears implications for a doctrine of the economic Trinity--specifically with respect to its freedom--which we will unfold in several steps.

We begin by pointing out that since in his temporal consciousness Jesus experiences his mission and Person as *eternally* being sent from the Father,³²³ it follows that Jesus likewise experiences his consent to the Father’s sending of him as *timeless*. For just as “Jesus’ awareness of

³²¹ *Prayer*, 147: “[T]his human personality who goes about among men is a Person pertaining to God, one who, in his mission, not only speaks of the Father, but represents him; reveals him too in every conceivable way, active as well as passive, in strength and in weakness, in his utterance and in silence.”

³²² *YCY*, 103.

³²³ *TD* 3, 180: “[I]n his *temporal* consciousness, he experiences this gift of himself (from the Father’s hand) as *timeless* (as the absolute ‘I am’ utterances make plain).” Recall also *TD* 3, 227: “[F]or Jesus, there is no conceivable point at which the identity of his ‘I’ and his mission *started*.” Emphasis Balthasar’s.

his mission...has no conceivable beginning”,³²⁴ so too we must understand “the *freedom* of Jesus in the context of his mission-consciousness [as] having no conceivable beginning”.³²⁵ Indeed, Jesus experiences his mission as something that “he has *always* laid hold of *already*....he will not be able to say that his mission existed prior to his having affirmed and grasped it; for it is *always* his.”³²⁶ Likewise, in his self-consciousness Jesus knows that “he is the one who has *always* consented to it-’for this I came’ (Jn 10:10).”³²⁷ Now because of the identity between (1) the eschatological (and hence, divine and eternal) nature of Jesus’ mission and Person, and (2) his consent to the Father’s sending of him, “this identity implies that the Son shares divinity with the creating Father, and that he is *free* in accepting the task of reconciliation (which, from the very outset, was seen to involve the ‘blood’ of the Cross: Eph 1:7)”.³²⁸ That is to say, “the Son dedicates himself to the world’s salvation just as eternally as the Father does; from before all time he pledges himself to carry out the world plan, through his Cross, for the good (the ‘very good’) of the world”.³²⁹ Elsewhere Balthasar argues the same: “the identity...points back to a mysteriously supratemporal event that can be nothing but the unanimous salvific decision on the part of the Trinity”, in which eternal decision the Son offers himself in unreserved correspondence to the Father whose free economic initiative and purpose summons him to an obediential self-surrender unto death on a cross (Phil 2:8).³³⁰ The total self-identification with his mission that Jesus demonstrates in his earthly

³²⁴ TD 3, 188.

³²⁵ TD 3, 197. Emphasis mine. TD 3, 225: “Jesus’ personal freedom is identical with his mission (which has no conceivable beginning; he did not discover it subsequently).” And TD 3, 199: “We cannot conceive of a time when he had *not* (yet) consented to this mission and offered himself for it.” Emphasis Balthasar’s.

³²⁶ TD 3, 198. Emphasis mine.

³²⁷ TD 3, 226. Emphasis mine.

³²⁸ TD 3, 517-18. Emphasis mine.

³²⁹ TD 3, 514. See TD 3, 516.

³³⁰ TD 3, 187. In addition, *Rdr*, 179: “The will of the Father which is communicated to the Son in the *pneuma* is, in fact, the eternal trinitarian plan for the reconciliation of the world. [Since] in eternity the Son and the Spirit share in this decision just as much as the Father...the inspiration of Christ through the Holy Spirit not only brings him the will of the Father in economic terms, but also, deep within this, his own trinitarian will....He knows...that he has always already said Yes in an eternal, by no means merely passive, agreement with that will of the Father.” See also *GL* 7, 256.

existence, therefore, is the temporal manifestation of his eternally free consent given over to the Father, that the Father's creative action may be brought to its (redemptive) completion in the sending of the Son. And if we take up once more Balthasar's key phrase--"of his very *essence* he [Jesus] reveals God, but he does so in the *personal* mode"³³¹--here within the context of Jesus' freedom, it becomes clear that his consent to his mission reveals, not only its divine and eternal dimension, but concomitantly the divine and eternal economic freedom of the *trinitarian* God.

Jesus of Nazareth, in his earthly life, is in communion and dialogue, not with "God"...but with his Father....[As for the Son's eternal consent to his mission, it is not given] by the Son in lonely isolation; it is always a triune decision in which the hierarchy of the hypostatic processions is preserved, notwithstanding the consubstantiality and coeternity of the Persons. It is always in the Holy Spirit that the Son takes up the mission that comes from the Father. Thus the incarnate Son, in his freedom (which is now a human freedom too), does not embrace his own will as God but primarily the Father's will, to which he has always consented.³³²

F. *The economic and the immanent Trinity*

The tri-Personal economic freedom of God that is disclosed in the event of Jesus' mission presupposes that the Godhead itself must be such that this divinely free trinitarian self-disposing is possible. That the incarnate Son can dispose of himself in filial freedom (as the One who is sent) in relation to the Father's self-disposing in paternal freedom (as the One who sends) must have its transcendental condition of possibility in an inter-Personal relation of reciprocal self-disposing between the Father and the Son in the eternal immanent life of God. God can manifest himself economically as free tri-Personal self-giving only if such eternal selflessness vis-à-vis the Other is of the essence of his own inner-divine life. Accordingly, in the mutual self-donation between the Father and the incarnate Son in the Holy Spirit "we can discern free operations, which, while from the world's perspective they can be distinguished (economically), in fact refer back to something

³³¹ TD 3, 225. Emphasis Balthasar's.

³³² TD 3, 199.

that takes place--beyond our grasp--in absolute Love itself".³³³ This is why the Father's free economic self-giving-over in his sending of the Son can be the temporal expression of his immanent self-giving-over in his generating of the Son; and it is why Jesus' economic obedience to the Father who sends him can be the prolongation of his absolute immanent correspondence to the Father who begets him.³³⁴ This is also ultimately why a genuine *theo*-drama between the Father who sends and the Son who is sent is possible, for the economic activity of the triune God is a free and gracious salvific "projection" onto the temporal plane of the primal inner-divine drama whereby God eternally constitutes himself as absolute tri-Personal love.³³⁵ "The whole salvation event...takes place on the most narrow path: it occurs within the divine intersubjectivity ...in the inner-trinitarian conversation, at the place of exchange" between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.³³⁶ Therefore, what we have said thus far concerning the Father's free handing over of his "fatherly work" (one with his Person) to the incarnate Son's free self-disposing can be understood as the temporal "translation", as it were, of the inner-divine *theo*-drama that eternally originates in the Father's begetting of the Son.

Now if, with Balthasar, we grant the above (and here we include our previous assertion that the full and final revelation of the mystery of the Trinity does not precede the mystery of the paschal event itself),³³⁷ this is as much as to say that because the divine Persons in God coincide

³³³ *TD* 3, 21. Balthasar remarks similarly in *YCY*, 142-43: "It is in Jesus Christ that we first discern this 'over against', and if we take his Godhead seriously...it presupposes some distinction within God himself. It presupposes a reciprocity that, far from vitiating the unity of the divine Being, actually gives God his overflowing vitality." See also *MH*, 69; and *TD* 3, 188.

³³⁴ *TD* 3, 22: "[T]he Son, the obedient One, reveals what is taking place within the Godhead....In christological terms, the creature's obedient distance from his Creator and Master becomes transparent, revealing that 'distance' within the Godhead, in the Spirit, between the Son and the Father." See *TD* 3, 187, 191, 530; *GL* 7, 214, 380; and *WEL*, 147.

³³⁵ See *TD* 1, 319, 321.

³³⁶ *Rdr*, 140. See *TD* 2, 88; *GL* 7, 311; *WEL*, 239-40.

³³⁷ See *MP*, 212. In addition, *MP*, 41: "[T]he Cross is the acme of the entire redeeming and revealing work of the triune God." And *TFG*, 99: "The mystery of the cross is the highest revelation of the Trinity."

with their dramatic action in salvation history,³³⁸ it is possible for us to know God “not only from outside, not only ‘economically’, but also we may possess him ‘theologically’, from within, as he is”.³³⁹ Thus by means of his theodramatic approach, Balthasar arrives at agreement with the theological axiom that “it is only on the basis of the economic Trinity that we can have knowledge of the immanent Trinity and dare to make statements about it”.³⁴⁰ And since what assuredly appears in the triad of God’s economic activity is the prolongation of God’s inner-trinitarian drama (the immanent Trinity), it is the latter which grounds and supports the former. On this account, the order or inner law of the economic Trinity corresponds to that of the immanent Trinity from which it arises.³⁴¹

Nevertheless, while it is the immanent Trinity that prolongates and interprets itself as the economic Trinity, it is impossible to deduce that this self-interpretation in terms of an intramundane “performance” was necessary.³⁴² Essentially this means that “the economic Trinity cannot be regarded as simply identical with the immanent”.³⁴³ Indeed, if such were the case, the triune God would be shackled to the world process, necessarily involved with the world because *needing* the world in order to attain to his own self-realization.³⁴⁴ But this would contradict the

³³⁸ *TD* 3, 508: “This provides the last and decisive vindication of the principle we have been setting forth in this book, namely, that theological persons cannot be defined in isolation from their dramatic action.” Inasmuch as we can affirm “a real identity” between the Son in his immanent generation from the Father and the Son in his economic mission from the Father, we can affirm, in turn, “a real identity” between the Father as the Generator of the consubstantial Son and the Father as the Sender of the incarnate Son.

³³⁹ *Rdr*, 25. “God is love; the immanent Trinity is revealed in the economic, and precisely in God’s ‘orthopraxis’”; *Rdr*, 114. See also *WEL*, 14.

³⁴⁰ *TD* 3, 508. See also *GL* 7, 107; *TD* 3, 21; *TD* 4, 320; *LA*, 72, n.2.

³⁴¹ See *TD* 3, 508, 157, 184; and *TD* 4, 322. Also K. Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970). (Original edition: *Mysterium Salutis*, Vol. II, *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*, Chapter 5, “Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendeter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte.”)

³⁴² See *GL* 7, 215; *TD* 1, 321.

³⁴³ *TD* 3, 157. So Balthasar can affirm “the distinction between the Son who eternally comes forth from the Father (*processio*) and the Son who is sent and goes forth into the world of time (*missio*)”; *ibid.* See also *TD* 2, 194-95; *Credo*, 38.

³⁴⁴ *TD* 3, 509: “Otherwise the immanent, eternal Trinity would threaten to dissolve into the economic; in other words, God would be swallowed up in the world process--a necessary stage, in this view, if he is to fully realize himself.” Balthasar argues elsewhere, *TD* 3, 529: “The drama [of salvation history] that takes place before him, which he is free to guide and in which he can intervene, is not his own ‘process’. Otherwise he would have to redeem himself;

phenomenon of Jesus whose freedom in love, since it coincides with the eschatological dimension of his mission and Person, points to the absolute freedom of the tri-Personal love of the Godhead itself. What concerns Balthasar here is the Hegelian view which, in his estimation, fails to do justice to, among other things, the transcendence of God, the phenomenon of love, and the freedom which both of these entail (assessed, of course, against the backdrop of God's self-revelation in biblical history).³⁴⁵ Accordingly, Balthasar insists that if in the accomplishment of the world's salvation it is as Father, Son, and Spirit that God acts, yet it is precisely "as *God* that he is thus involved",³⁴⁶ acting in the perfect integrity of absolute and eternal self-possession (hence, the consummation of Jesus' mission reveals him as the eternal consubstantial Son of God; Jn 1:1,18). The God who is unveiled in the economy of Jesus Christ is always already in himself reciprocal self-giving between an "I" and a "Thou" in a Spirit who is the personified Gift of 'covenantal' love. As such God does not *need* the world in order to have a beloved; "he does not *become* 'love' by having the world as his 'thou' and 'partner'".³⁴⁷ Indeed, Balthasar is unwavering in his contention that an adequate doctrine of the immanent Trinity must not allow the notion that necessity or compulsion in some way antecedes the (undetermined) self-giving that originates in the trinitarian Father. (See ahead to Chapter III.) For "with Christ's death and Resurrection and with the

he would have to be both Redeemer and Redeemed, which is self-contradictory. Part of him would be salvation, and another part would be in dire need of it." In addition, *TD* 2, 261: "God does not need the world to confirm him as God or to provide him with a series of stages to go through and so perfect himself; indeed, he does not even need the world to reveal to himself the possibilities of his omnipotence." See also *GL* 7, 17, and *SI*, 434.

³⁴⁵ See John O'Donnell's remarks in *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series, ed. by Brian Davies, O.P. (Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book, 1992), 13-14. Hegel's attempt to incorporate the world process into the "internal history of God" is found in his work *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1832). Following Hegel, J. Moltmann considers the paschal event of the economic Trinity to be the locus of the self-actualization of the immanent Trinity; see *The Crucified God* (London: SCM, 1974).

³⁴⁶ *TD* 3, 508-9. Emphasis Balthasar's.

³⁴⁷ *TD* 3, 509. Emphasis Balthasar's. See *TD* 3, 529; *TD* 4, 323; *Rdr*, 172, 197; *Prayer*, 148. Balthasar's reasoning is echoed by W. Kasper in *GJC*, 243-44: "The New Testament gives an unequivocal answer to the question, left open in the Old Testament, of God's vis-à-vis. It tells us that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the eternal Thou of the Father, and that in the Holy Spirit we human beings are accepted into the communion of love that exists between Father and Son. Consequently the New Testament is already able to sum up the eschatologically definitive self-revelation of God in the sentence: 'God is love' (1Jn 4:8,16). The trinitarian confessions of faith that are attested in the

outpouring of the Spirit...the highest self-disclosure of Absolute Being (inaccessible to philosophy) has taken place”:³⁴⁸ namely, that God is trinitarian love, and as such “is never ‘just there’ in the Positivist sense: rather, he is always the most ‘improbable’ miracle in that the utter *self-surrender* of the Father-Origin truly generates the coeternal Son and that the encounter and union of both [inclusive of the Son’s corresponding (engendered) *self-giving*] truly cause the one Spirit, the hypostasis of all that is meant by ‘*gift*,’ to proceed from both.”³⁴⁹ *This* God is the ultimate presupposition for the Lord of biblical history whose self-attestation from beginning to end is emphatic in its witness to his acting in sovereign freedom, even unto the infinite prodigality of the paschal event in which the Trinitarian Godhead surrenders itself as Father, Son, and Spirit for the redemption of the world. The economic Trinity, therefore, while the temporal expression of the eternal immanent Trinity, is *only* God’s free and gracious self-donation *for us*;³⁵⁰ in no way does the Trinity involve itself economically with the world’s destiny for its own (divine) sake, out of an eternal and absolute self-need.

This is not to say, however, that given the utterly free decision of the immanent Trinity to create and call us to participate in its own eternal life as those born from the Father in the Son by the Spirit, that the trinitarian Godhead does not, in virtue of this prodigal love, freely place itself “economically at risk”, as it were, in such a divine venture.³⁵¹ And indeed, as we shall discuss further on, inasmuch as this trinitarian decision preserves the hierarchy of the hypostatic processions, it is a decision that originates in the *Father’s* self-surrender offered economically for

New Testament are a spelling out of this sentence which interprets the revelational event that has taken place in Jesus Christ.” See also *ibid.*, 241, 248, 311.

³⁴⁸ *GL* 7, 107.

³⁴⁹ *TD* 2, 287. Emphasis mine. See *GL* 7, 17.

³⁵⁰ *GL* 7, 108: “Christianity is faith in an act of God’s trinitarian love, an act which he has taken the initiative in accomplishing...by which absolute love takes on the character of an event *pro nobis*.” Let us add that the term “only” as it appears in our main text above should not be understood as somehow reducing the glory that is God’s precisely as he acts *for us*.

³⁵¹ See *Credo*, 39-40

us, in which decision the Father binds himself to follow through to the end his work of “extending to man the relationship of natural Fatherhood in which he stands to the Son of his bosom”³⁵² (such is the fullness of spiritual blessings the Father planned for us before the world began; Eph 1:3-6). Thus, God the Father “is the central Actor” of the unfolding drama of the world’s salvation.³⁵³ It is his begetting of the Son as his perfect Image of kenotic self-giving expressed economically in terms of the Son’s incarnation unto Cross and Resurrection that is the ultimate source of the salvation and consummation of the world.

³⁵² Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, trans. Cyril Vollert, S.J. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1946), 358. Balthasar cites this passage in *CSL*, 79. See also *TD* 3, 18, 21, 529-30, 532, 535; *WEL*, 80; and W. Kasper, *GJC*, 275.

³⁵³ *TD* 3, 530: “This means that the Father who seems to be a Spectator is just as much in the play as the acting Son and the mediating Spirit. Indeed, we could say that he is the central Actor.” Elsewhere Balthasar refers to the Father as “the original actor” (*MP*, 136): “Only as the acting of the triune God does the Cross become tolerable to the believer....The original actor is God the Father: ‘All this is from God [the Father], who through (*dia*) Christ reconciled us to himself....That is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself’ (2Cor 5:19).” See also *TD* 3, 119-20.

PART TWO

THE INNER-TRINITARIAN FATHER AND THE *ORDO DOCTRINAE*

III

The “Primal Drama” of the Father’s Begetting of the Son: the transcendental theological ground of the orders of creation and redemption

Introductory Overview of Contemporary Correctives and Concerns

In his work, *The God of Jesus Christ*, Walter Kasper remarks on “a danger” inherent in the trinitarian theology of the West: namely, “that the inner-trinitarian Fatherhood of the Father may become *irrelevant* to God’s relationship to the world and human beings”.³⁵⁴ His criticism is due largely to the fact that although the Western tradition begins its presentation of dogmatic theology with the doctrine of the Trinity, it does so as separate from and following after the treatise “On God as One” (*De Deo Uno*).³⁵⁵ Such a division is criticized by Kasper for two reasons. First, it overlooks the witness of the New Testament and the early tradition, according to which the one God is always the trinitarian Father.³⁵⁶ Second, it treats of the three Persons starting with, and in

³⁵⁴ W. Kasper, *GJC*, 147. Emphasis mine.

³⁵⁵ Among Roman Catholic theologians who concur with this criticism of the typically Western approach we mention Karl Rahner in his work *The Trinity*, (*op. cit.*), esp. p. 58ff. And although dogmatic manuals of the East have tended to follow this approach in modern times, an increasing number of Eastern Orthodox theologians are stepping forward to admonish this practice. In doing so they intend to reclaim the contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers to trinitarian theology--or better, to a Christian (and hence trinitarian) doctrine of God. John D. Zizioulas, for example, in his work *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993) 17, argues that “the Holy Trinity is a *primordial* ontological concept and not a notion which is added to the divine substance or rather which follows it....The substance of God, ‘God’, has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion.”

³⁵⁶ See *GJC*, 147. See also K. Rahner, “Theos in the New Testament”, in *Theological Investigations I*, Cornelius Ernst transl. (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1963), 79-148; and “Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise ‘De

terms of, the one divine (undifferentiated) essence or substance. Specifically, the three Persons in God are explained according to the essential activities of knowing and willing which belong to the spiritual nature of self-subsistent Being (*ipsum esse subsistens*). The unity of God's immanent activity is therefore established predominantly on the basis of the oneness of nature or substance rather than, as in the Eastern theological tradition, on the basis of the Father as the sole origin and principle of unity of the trinitarian Godhead.³⁵⁷ Thus when the trinitarian Godhead turns toward the world in the work of creation and the history of salvation, the unity of this divine activity is again interpreted primarily on the basis of the one divine nature as a single principle of operation rather than on the communion of trinitarian self-giving constitutive of the divine substance, and which originates in the Father as the primal source of absolute love.³⁵⁸ In practice, this approach has inhibited the development of a specifically *trinitarian* interpretation of God's economic activity.³⁵⁹ Considering the focus of our study, it has obscured the biblical message about God the Father as the personal origin and source of all reality in the orders of creation and redemption,³⁶⁰ and concomitantly has meant the neglect of a doctrine of God's *involvement as Father* in the salvation of the world.

These criticisms have also been voiced by the International Theological Commission. In its 1981 document "Theology, Christology, Anthropology", the Commission asserts that while "it was

Trinitate", in *Theological Investigations* IV, Kevin Smyth transl. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), 77-102. Also M. Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des heiligen Augustinus* (Münster, 1927), 19.

³⁵⁷ "Thus we find that in their treatises *De Deo uno* (On God as One) the Scholastics can speak of God, his nature, his attributes and thus also about his relation to the world without saying a word about the Father"; *GJC*, 147. See also *GJC*, 296. Perhaps one can say that in the Eastern approach, the Father is logically and ontologically prior to the trinitarian Godhead, whereas in the Western approach it is the one nature or substance that holds conceptual and ontological priority.

³⁵⁸ See *GJC*, 146. Consequently, Kasper offers this corrective remark (*GJC*, 305): "The doctrine of the Trinity concretizes the initially abstract assertion of the unity and oneness of God by determining in what this oneness consists. The oneness of God is defined as a communion of Father and Son, but indirectly and implicitly also as a communion of Father, Son, and Spirit; it is defined as unity in love." See also *GJC*, 306, 142, 144.

³⁵⁹ *GJC*, 312: Such an approach leads "to stripping the Trinity to a large extent of any function in the economy of salvation. Despite its being placed before the other dogmatic treatises the doctrine of the Trinity is, in this approach, largely without influence on the further presentation of dogmatic theology."

the practice of neo-scholasticism to segregate the consideration of the Trinity from the whole Christian mystery”, today “any kind of distinction between Christology and the Trinity is to be avoided in theology and catechetics”. The Commission goes on to affirm that our knowledge of the mystery of the Trinity has as its sole definitive source the economy of Jesus Christ. It is through the Father’s sending of the Son which culminates in the gift of the Holy Spirit that the hidden mystery of the divine essence is fully unveiled: God is love, and as such is Trinity (cf. 1Jn 4:7f.; Jn 3:16). And since God in the economy “exercises his liberty absolutely”, we can say that “an eternal and immanent Trinity is of necessity presupposed by an economic Trinity”, and that “it is this Trinity that gives itself freely and graciously in the economy of salvation”.³⁶¹

A possible synthesis of the theological concerns of both the Western/Latin and Eastern/Greek traditions emerges if we take as our point of departure for a Christian doctrine of God the biblical fact that God is revealed to be love through his sending of his only Son. Inasmuch as love is the activity that constitutes the divine substance, as a point of departure it can be rendered compatible with the Latin approach.³⁶² Yet inasmuch as the divine love made manifest in salvation history is premierly paternal (God as sending his Son), it indicates at the same time--and not as conceptually subsequent--the Person of the Father who cannot be the Primal Lover except in an eternal relationship with the Absolute Beloved in the Spirit of their common love³⁶³ (and thus we are simultaneously in accord with the Greek approach). Indeed, we may take our cue from the ITC and employ a “metaphysic of charity” in which person has a certain primacy over substance.³⁶⁴ For

³⁶⁰ See *GJC*, 147.

³⁶¹ *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 1 - 2.2, p. 211-12.

³⁶² See *GJC*, 196, 216.

³⁶³ “The monotheism of the Old Testament has its origins in a supernatural revelation and therefore retains an intrinsic relation to--indeed, demands--the Trinitarian revelation.” *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, B, 3, p. 211. For an elaboration of this assertion, see Kasper’s *GJC*, 243-44.

³⁶⁴ A “metaphysic of charity” is recommended by the International Theological Commission in its 1981 document “Theology, Christology, Anthropology”, I, D, pp. 212-14. For a survey and analysis of various approaches in contemporary thought that endeavor to meet this recommendation, see John S. Grabowski, “Person: Substance and

love, while it presupposes a spiritual nature, is in its inmost essence an act of self-donation. As such, love justifies starting with the person as the *principium quod*: as the subject who exercises the faculties of intellection and volition in the mode of self-giving toward an Other. The lover does not intend to disclose primarily that he acts according to the spiritual faculties of his nature (as abstracted from determination by the person), but that the natural operations of intellection and volition are performed as communicative of the person who gives himself, as expressive of his affirmation of and self-surrender to the beloved. This approach refrains from conceiving of the person as the “result”, if you will, of these natural operations (a weakness in the Western approach), and instead affords a more direct consideration of the person as the principle of their exercise precisely as love. In other words, we can hold simultaneously that the person (*principium quod*) is primary as regards love, even while the person’s self-giving presupposes acting by a spiritual nature (*principium quo*).

Inasmuch as this approach is biblically justified and consistent with the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople (which start with the one God and Father, and then confess the Son and Spirit to be one in being or substance with the Father), we find it reflected in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which treats of God’s oneness and attributes in the chapter entitled “I Believe in God the Father” (#198ff.).³⁶⁵ Similarly, *Katholischer Erwachsenen Katechismus: Das Glaubensbekenntnis der Kirche*, a work of the German Bishops’ Conference, discusses the divine essence

Relation”, in *Communio* 22 (Spring, 1995), 139-163. One such approach is proposed by David L. Schindler, who attempts to locate relation in the *esse* of the human person: in his view, there is a three-fold character to being: being as subsistent in itself (*esse-in*), being as receptive (*esse-ab*), and being as communicative (*esse-ad*). See Schindler, “Norris Clarke on Person, Being, and St. Thomas”, *Communio* 20 (Fall, 1993), 580-92. John D. Zizioulas, in accord with the Cappadocian theological tradition, argues that the proper mode of existence for substances is within a hypostasis understood relationally. See his *Being as Communion*. And Jean Galot holds to the fundamental analogy between divine and human personhood by speaking of human persons as “subsisting relations” or “hypostatic relations”. See Galot, *Who is Christ?: A Theology of the Incarnation* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981), 299; and “La définition de la personne, relation et sujet”, *Gregorianum* 75 (1994), 296.

³⁶⁵ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, trans. United States Catholic Conference, Inc. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994). Henceforth, CCC.

and attributes within the context of “Part One: God the Father”.³⁶⁶ For his part, Kasper attempts “to develop the material concerns of the treatise *De Deo Uno* in the form of a doctrine on God the Father” in his book *The God of Jesus Christ*.³⁶⁷

As noted above, the neo-scholastic practice of separating the doctrine of the Trinity from the doctrine of God as One issued in the concomitant practice of segregating the consideration of the Trinity from the economy of salvation. Such a practice repeatedly overlooked the principle that “the mystery of Jesus Christ belongs to the structure of the Trinity”. Consequently, “it did not take sufficient account of the Trinity in its understanding of the Incarnation and the deification of man”,³⁶⁸ nor in its theology of the Cross. That is to say, in its systematization according to the order of being it did not make a consistent effort to theologize by moving from the eternal Trinity to the divine works in the economy, explaining these works against the backdrop of the Trinity. (Conversely, when approaching the Christian mysteries according to the order of knowledge, it did not take sufficient account of the Father’s sending of the Son unto the paschal event as the historical “translation” of the Father’s eternal begetting of the Son, and thus was significantly deficient in elucidating the latter in terms of the former.) A major factor contributing to this negligence was a too narrow interpretation of the teaching that God, operating by a single nature, acts as a single principle in relation to creation. What made neo-scholasticism’s interpretation too narrow was its inclination to view this single principle as an undifferentiated rather than a trinitarian unity, an inclination evidencing that perspective which establishes the unity of God on the basis of the oneness of nature while excluding from consideration the trinitarian processions within the Godhead. Hence the distinction of Persons tended to be dissolved in its conception of

³⁶⁶ Verband der Diözesen Deutschlands, Bonn, 1985. ET: *A Catholic Catechism for Adults: The Church’s Confession of Faith*, Stephen Wentworth Arndt transl. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press/Communio), 1987. Henceforth, *CCF*.

³⁶⁷ *GJC*, 147.

the one divine nature acting *ad extra*. For example, neo-scholasticism discussed the Incarnation primarily in terms of the relation between the divine nature and the human nature in Christ without considering the divine nature precisely as the divine nature of the Son, that is, constituted as a properly filial mode of divine being. This tendency to consider the divine nature as undifferentiated when it operates in the economy is also evident in the idea (prevalent in neo-scholasticism) that any of the three divine Persons could have become man.³⁶⁹ Today, with the simplicity and prudence appropriate to its task, the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* treats the issue as follows: “The whole divine economy is the common work of the three divine Persons. For as the Trinity has only one and the same nature, so too does it have only one and the same operation: ‘the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not three principles of creation but one principle’.³⁷⁰ However each divine Person performs the common work according to his unique personal property....It is above all the divine missions of the Son’s Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit that show forth the properties of the divine Persons.”³⁷¹

While the new *Catechism* provides a sure norm for teaching the Church’s faith, it belongs to the task of the International Theological Commission to propose concrete guidelines concerning the direction which contemporary theology ought to take in advancing our doctrinal understanding of the Trinity. It is therefore highly significant that the Commission, in its section on the revelation of the Trinity, devotes its concluding remarks entirely to the Person of the Father (which remarks account for at least one third of this section). This choice may be viewed as the Commission’s manner of summoning theologians to an authentic theological development of the doctrine of God

³⁶⁸ *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 2.1, p. 211.

³⁶⁹ See K. Rahner, “Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise ‘De Trinitate’”, *op. cit.*, 79-81.

³⁷⁰ Council of Florence (1442): DS 1331; cf. Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 421.

³⁷¹ *CCC*, #258.

the Father. We can extract several directives from the text of the Commission for such a development:

(1) “The Father’s relationship to the incarnate Son, in the communication of the gift of the Spirit, *is* the very relationship that constitutes the Trinity.”³⁷² This points us toward the Father as the primal source of the triune Godhead.

(2) If the economic Trinity presupposes the immanent Trinity, the Father’s eternal and inner-divine begetting of the Son must be the condition for the possibility of his sending of the Son, and indeed is expressed therein--translated into temporal terms.

(3) Inasmuch as the sending of the Son takes the form of a “kenotic event” that attains its consummation in Cross and Resurrection, we can interpret this event--precisely in its kenotic form--as the temporal expression of the eternal event of generation.³⁷³

(4) The “kenotic event” of the Son’s mission “affects in some way the being proper to God the Father...insofar as he...accomplishes these mysteries and really shares them as belonging to himself” in the manner proper to his paternal activity and in virtue of the trinitarian *perichoresis*.³⁷⁴ Although this aspect of trinitarian doctrine has not received sufficient attention in the past, it “merits further attention”.³⁷⁵

(5) In the endeavor to elucidate this (economic) paternal affectivity and involvement, “the distinction must be maintained between the immanent Trinity...and the Trinity of the economy of salvation.”³⁷⁶ With this distinction secured, we can acknowledge that “in the intimate life of the triune God the very potential exists for the realization of these events which, through the

³⁷² *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 3, p. 212. Emphasis mine.

³⁷³ The text reads: “In the economy of salvation we see the Eternal Son take on in his own life the ‘kenotic’ event of birth, of human life, and of the death on the Cross....These great events in the life of Jesus...make efficacious in a new way the eternal word of generation in which the Father says to the Son: ‘You are my Son: this day have I begotten you’ (Ps 2:7)”; *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 3, p. 212.

³⁷⁴ *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 3, p. 212.

³⁷⁵ *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, B, 5, p. 222.

inexplicable freedom of God, take place for us in the history of salvation”.³⁷⁷ If indeed the Father is affected in some way by the paschal event, we are thus directed to seek the condition for such a possibility in the eternal event of the Father’s begetting of the Son.

Hans Urs von Balthasar (along with Walter Kasper) was a member of the International Theological Commission during the time of the document’s composition and was assuredly one of its major contributors. As chapter II of our study has shown, Balthasar’s theodramatic theory (completed for the most part prior to the ITC document)³⁷⁸ provides theological foundation for, and substantiation of, all of the document’s directives enumerated above (1-5). Regarding the fourth and fifth points, for instance, we have discussed the Father’s (economic) involvement and affectivity in section E.4. *Paternal dependence, receptivity, and self-exposure vis-à-vis Jesus’ filial freedom*, and have argued from there to the distinction between the economic and the immanent Trinity, leaving us the task in our present chapter to elucidate the Father’s inner-divine begetting of the Son as grounding and supporting the mystery of his personal involvement in (including his being affected in some way by) the “kenotic event” of the Son’s mission. With respect to the relation between trinitarian doctrine and Christology, Balthasar gives this account of his own approach: “It is not simply that the full doctrine of the Trinity can be unfolded only on the basis of a theology of the Cross and is inseparable from it: rather, we must see the doctrine of the Trinity as the ever-present presupposition of the doctrine of the Cross.”³⁷⁹ Precisely because he approaches the Trinity from its definitive revelatory basis in the Christ event (rather than from predominantly “essentialist” categories of the nature of Absolute Being or Spirit which are acquired apart from

³⁷⁶ ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 2.2, p. 212.

³⁷⁷ ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 3, p. 212, and II, B, 5.2, p. 222.

³⁷⁸ This can be asserted with certainty for volumes 1-4 of *Theo-Drama* (volumes I-III of the original German edition).

³⁷⁹ TD 4, 319.

this event), Balthasar is able to explicate the Father's eternal begetting of the Son in view of its economic expression in the temporal sending, and as a result his trinitarian theology permits further elaboration of a doctrine of God the Father that retains "the form and content of the 'event' of the saving Trinity".³⁸⁰ Furthermore, since such a doctrine of the Father is inseparable from God's salvific action in and through the mission of Jesus Christ, it provides a positive response to Kasper's concern that the inner-trinitarian Fatherhood of God may be regarded as irrelevant to human history.

Here, then, in the second part of our study, we will discuss the Father's begetting of the Son in the eternal and immanent Trinity, "an action he both 'does' and 'is'".³⁸¹ Having traced in Part One the Father's self-revelation in the dramatic form of the Son's mission, we intend now to illuminate the dramatic form of the eternal Father himself. Although we will be entering the realm of complicated theological "treatises", our intent will be that of Balthasar's own within the context of his theodramatic theory: which is to "present an *outline*, a *sketch*" of the Father's generative activity, "just enough to give an idea of his part" in the primal drama of the inner-divine Trinity.³⁸² Whenever possible we will endeavor to show how the eternal event of the Father's begetting of the Son serves as ground and presupposition of the (*ad extra*) event of the Father's sending the Son unto the Cross and Resurrection, as well as the Father's creating and adopting mankind as his children in his eternal Beloved. That is to say, we will be providing a three-tiered exposition of a doctrine of the trinitarian Father which moves from the Father of the consubstantial, eternal Son

³⁸⁰ *LA*, 72, n.2: "Wherever Scripture intends a revelation of God (as he is in himself) through the revelation of Christ...then this revelation is necessarily given in the midst of the economic salvific action and not apart from it. To behave as though St. Paul was 'only' concerned with an 'economic' Trinity betrays as much theological indigence as that false dogmatic theology which, instead of retaining the form and content of the 'event' of the saving Trinity, elaborates a network of categories in order to explore the inner life of the Trinity apart from this event." See *TD* 2, 11-12.

³⁸¹ *TD* 4, 324.

³⁸² *TD* 3, 11. Emphasis Balthasar's. Balthasar explicitly refers to the immanent Trinity as constituting the "primal drama" in *ibid.*, 325.

(the immanent Trinity), to the Father of the incarnate Son (the economic Trinity), to the Father of creation and of the covenant of grace.

A. The Father-Begetter as Source, as Alpha of the Trinitarian Godhead

The Person of the Father is the deepest mystery of the divinity, since the Father is the original source of the trinitarian love that constitutes God's essence.³⁸³ Even though God only exists as Father in his eternal act of begetting the Son, and so in this sense is never without the Son, yet inasmuch as it is *he*, in his singularity, who generates the Son--while requiring no fructifying from another--we can speak of a primordial beginning in which the Father acts "alone".³⁸⁴ We mean here to highlight the Father as the sole origin and principle³⁸⁵--"the originless Generator" [*der ursprunglos Zeugende*]³⁸⁶--of the eternal event of the divine processions whose order constitutes

³⁸³ "[T]he Person of the Father becomes the greatest mystery"; "On the concept of Person", *art. cit.*, p. 26. *Rdr*, 180: "The divine Father is the inexhaustible flowing source of the divinity." See also *GL* 7, 510.

³⁸⁴ *GL* 7, 377: "In the act of [generative] communication, he [the Father] is essentially alone and speaks without partner." See *TD* IV, 82, where Balthasar cites Adrienne von Speyr's *Die Welt des Gebetes* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1951), 58. In *Credo*, 30, Balthasar goes on to argue that "it is because he bears fruit out of himself and requires no fructifying that he is called Father, and not in the sexual sense, for he will be the Creator of man and woman, and thus contains the primal qualities of woman in himself in the same simultaneously transcending way as those of man. (The Greek *gennao* can imply both siring and bearing, as can the word for to come into being: *ginomai*)." See ahead to section E of this chapter where we will elucidate the supra-feminine quality of God the Father in the context of discussing paternal receptivity.

³⁸⁵ "Among the Greek Fathers...the ontological 'principle' or 'cause' of the being and life of God does not consist in the one substance of God but in the *hypostasis*, that is, *the person of the Father*"; John D. Zizioulas, *op. cit.*, 40 (emphasis author's). Even in the context of the predominantly essentialist approach of the Western theological tradition, we find Augustine asserting: "The Father is the Principle of the whole Deity"; *De Trin.*, IV, 20 (PL 42, 908). According to St. Thomas, *S. Th.* I, q. 33, a. 4: "[A] first principle is known in two ways. In one way, as the first principle, by reason of its having a relation to what proceeds from itself; in another way, inasmuch as it is a first principle by reason of its not being from another. So, too, the Father is known in relation to the Persons proceeding from himself...and by the fact that he is not from another." Hence, the eternal Father is "the principle not from a principle." St. Thomas continues (*ibid.*, ad. 2): The Father is the *first* principle--as the principle not derived from another--and thus possesses an originative singularity that "does not belong...to the divine essence, of which it may be said that it is in the Son or in the Holy Spirit from another--namely, from the Father"; see also *ibid.*, a. 1. Consideration of the Father as the principle of trinitarian unity is given further emphasis among Western theologians who contributed a more personalist approach to the Latin tradition of trinitarian doctrine: most noteworthy are Hilary of Poitiers, William of St. Thierry, Richard of St. Victor, Alexander of Hales, and Bonaventure. See A. Malet, *Personne et amour dans la théologie trinitaire de saint Thomas d'Aquin*; T. de Régnon, *Etudes de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité*, 3 vols., (Paris, 1092-8); M.J. Le Guillou, *Das Mysterium des Vaters*, 104ff.; and W. Kasper, *GJC*, 298.

³⁸⁶ *TD* IV (G.O.), 80. According to Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1974), Bk. 1, Pt. 2, Sect. 2, Ch. 2, #18, p. 70: "The Church Fathers generally recognize 'ungeneratedness' [solely] as a property of God the Father...[inasmuch as they] regard it as signifying not only 'not being generated' but also having no origin (*ingenitus* = *sine principio*), and 'being the origin of the two other Persons.'

the nature of God as absolute love. For indeed “God *is* love in himself, begetting and begotten,...from which [‘covenantal’] communion there proceeds...[the Holy Spirit as] the eternal fruit and witness of love”.³⁸⁷

This is why, with respect to the theo-drama between God and his covenant partner in the economy of salvation, Balthasar can state that “the original actor is God the Father”.³⁸⁸ And again: “Everything proceeds from the Father’s salvific will”--the whole divine economy--“insofar as the Son and the Spirit proceed eternally from his unfathomable and fruitful goodness”.³⁸⁹ Scripture expresses it thus: “there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we exist; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we exist” (1Cor 8:6; cf. Eph 4:6).³⁹⁰

B. The paternal mode of infinite freedom: unconditioned initiative as self-gift

For Balthasar, we can understand by means of philosophical reflection that the Absolute, the infinite ground of all reality, “knows and wills itself, grasps and affirms itself,...[and] as such is immediately subjective and equally infinitely self-illuminating and self-possessed and hence is absolutely free in itself, in no way restricted or rivaled.”³⁹¹ The freedom, then, that is proper to infinite being is itself infinite. This holds true for the God whose activity in the economy of

St. John of Damascus, *De fide orth.*, I, 8: ‘The Father alone is ungenerated; for he has his being not from another Person.’ Cf. Denz. 275, 277 (11th Synod of Toledo: *Solus Pater est ingenitus*).’

³⁸⁷ *Rdr*, 186. And again: “In God, the relationship of the Father and the Son in the Spirit of God *is* his very being”; *GL* 7, 311. See *MP*, viii. Also Norbert Hoffmann’s essay, “Atonement and the Ontological Coherence Between the Trinity and the Cross”, transl. by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, in *Toward a Civilization of Love*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 237-38, henceforth “Trinity and the Cross”.

³⁸⁸ *MP*, 136.

³⁸⁹ *TFG*, 28. And *YCY*, 158: “God the Father [is] the origin of *everything*”; *ibid.*, 28: “he is the primal source of *everything*”. Emphasis mine.

³⁹⁰ Additional Scripture passages referring to the one God as Father include (in the Old Testament): Mal 2:10; Dt 32:6; Jer 3:19; 31:9; Is 63:15-16; 64:7; (in the New Testament): Eph 1:2ff.; Mt 23:9; Jn 5:44 together with Jn 8:50,54; Jn 10:29 together with Isaiah 43:13; and regarding the Father as Alpha and Omega, see Jn 6:57 and 14:6.

³⁹¹ *TD* 2, 255.

salvation reveals the essence of absolute self-possession to coincide with self-surrender: freedom (premierly in its archetypal absolute) is a freedom of self-giving in love.

The light which revelation sheds on God shows us...[that] God is not only by nature free in his self-possession, in his ability to do what he will with himself; for that very reason, he is also free to do what he will with his own nature. That is, he can surrender himself; as Father he can share his Godhead with the Son....The fact that the absolute freedom of self-possession can understand itself, according to its absolute nature, as limitless self-giving--this is not determined by anything external to itself; yet [inasmuch as "it coincides with the act-quality of God's nature"]...apart from this self-giving, it would not be itself.³⁹²

In effect, there is an identity of freedom and necessity in the essence of absolute love: limitless self-giving in God is the form-quality of absolute and infinite freedom, that is to say, of the divine essence, and hence it is determined by nothing other than itself; at the same time, limitless self-giving in God is necessary in respect of its constitutive identity with absolute being, so that it cannot be other than it is.³⁹³

It is left for us to explicate this identity of freedom and necessity with respect to the eternal Father's generative act. To say that the Father's generative act is necessary is to say that it is neither optional nor arbitrary. For the boundlessness of divine freedom (in what concerns God's self-constitutive act) is of such plenitude that its exercise cannot be restricted by a choice of acting one way rather than another. If the Father could *not* have generated the Son but nonetheless chose to do so, his Fatherhood would mean the diminution of the Godhead inasmuch as divinity is of its nature infinitely free and hence unlimited by the "not" which options entail (potential not realized).³⁹⁴ Moreover, the Father's begetting of the Son is without doubt not free in the sense of

³⁹² *TD* 2, 256.

³⁹³ *TD* 2, 314: "God is what he wills to be, and he wills to be what he is." Balthasar is echoing the definition of infinite freedom used by Gregory of Nyssa (*Enn.* VI, 8, 13 = PG 45, 609B) who has adopted it from Plotinus (See *TD* 2, 235).

³⁹⁴ From here one can argue that there can be only one generation in God. Granted revelation shows us that the divine Persons are distinguished by their relations of origin, the limitlessness of the Father's surrender of self and of divinity *vis à vis* an Other as his Beloved is such that there would be nothing to distinguish our hypothetical "additional" beloved from the Son.

being arbitrary,” since it “coincides with the act-quality of his essence.”³⁹⁵ It is, in fact, “a perpetual occurrence in which essence and activity coincide.”³⁹⁶ Nevertheless, while it is true that the Father could not *not* beget the Son, we would be wrong to infer that the Father is constrained to do so. As the primal source of absolute love, the Father is not determined antecedently by any ‘nature’ or prescriptions from Being which would compel him, so to speak, to generate the Son: such as the law of the *bonum diffusivum sui*, or the law of the Hegelian dialectic which holds that “the eternal generation of the Son...expresses some *need* on the part of the Father...to translate himself into his antithesis, the Son, in order to show himself to be really and truly Father.”³⁹⁷ Balthasar’s concern is to uphold an adequate inner-divine precondition for the utter gratuitousness of the Father’s *ad extra* activity in creating the world and in sending the Son to become flesh unto the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit. On this account he rejects any doctrine of the inner-divine begetting that would vitiate the Father’s eternally simultaneous possession and dispossession of the divinity in an act expressive of absolute initiative and pure self-giving. It is the groundlessness of the divine essence as absolute interpersonal love³⁹⁸ that grounds the ground-less as utterly gracious *ad extra* activity of the God of Jesus Christ. In Balthasar’s words: “The immanent Trinity must be understood to be that eternal, absolute self-surrender whereby God is seen to be, in

³⁹⁵ TD 2, 256. The German original reads (p. 232): “Seine Freiheit ist deshalb auch kein aus seinem Wesen einzeln resultierender Akt, sondern fällt mit der Akthaftigkeit seines Wesens zusammen.” Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I, q. 19, art. 3.

³⁹⁶ *Credo*, 30.

³⁹⁷ TD 2, 126: “[T]he eternal generation of the Son...is not something that results simply from the Father’s ‘nature’ as the One who pours himself out (otherwise we could have grasped the ‘law’ of Being in the *bonum diffusivum sui* and so have mastered it). Nor does it express some *need* on the part of the Father, that is, the need to translate himself into his antithesis, the Son, in order to show himself to be really and truly Father. (For in this case the law of dialectic would be higher than the freedom of self-giving love, and man, having deduced this law, would have gained power over God and the world in the form of ‘absolute knowledge’.) No proof may attempt to take us any farther than faith’s contemplation of the Father who surrenders his Son.” And GL 7, 17: “This absolute love is not determined in advance by any ‘nature’ in the eternal Father which would ‘make it necessary’ for him to beget the eternal Son; and in both there is no natural compulsion to make their love known to one another in the procession of the Spirit.”

³⁹⁸ TD 2, 255: “It will always be idle speculation to try to discover a ‘primal ground’ or ‘un-ground’ in God, something that is prior to his knowledge and affirmation of himself or that he has first to master in some ‘process’ or other.”

himself, absolute love; this in turn explains his free self-giving to the world as love, without suggesting that God ‘needed’ the world process and the Cross in order to become himself.”³⁹⁹

Broadening our scope to consider the paradox of the identity of freedom and necessity as it pertains to both generation and spiration in God, we can affirm that, inasmuch as the Father is the unoriginated principle of the *ordo processionis*, his paternal self-giving establishes a coincidence of freedom and necessity in the Son’s hypostatic mode of divinity. Since we shall discuss this point at greater length below, let it suffice here to indicate only briefly that the Father, in eternally generating the Son, determines the form-quality of divinity as love (kenotic self-giving in which “poverty and wealth are one and the same”),⁴⁰⁰ even as he lets-be the beloved Other to love. For his part, the Son shows that he is consubstantial with the Father by acting only in perfect correspondence to the Father’s form or way of being God [*Gottsein*], and yet precisely thereby does the Son show that he acts in the absolute freedom of limitless self-surrender. “God the Son and the Holy Spirit” eternally act as Persons equal in divinity with the Father, “but still with [a freedom] that is originally grounded in the fatherly Origin....[The Father’s self-donation] is the origin of all freedom--not in the sense of doing as one chooses, but in that of superior self-possession of the love which surrenders itself. This freedom is bestowed upon the Son along with divinity.”⁴⁰¹ Thus, corresponding to the infinite freedom of the triune God is a “necessary will” [*Nezessitäts-willen*] that constitutes itself in terms of a nonreversible order from the Father to the Son and from

³⁹⁹ *TD* 4, 323. Cf. also *TD* 4, 326; and *GL* 7, 17. Here we are arguing “from above” what we have affirmed “from below” in Chapter 2. The ITC concurs: “Therefore, the distinction must be maintained between the immanent Trinity, where liberty and necessity are the same thing in the eternal essence of God, and the Trinity of the economy of salvation, where God exercises his liberty absolutely, with no suggestion of his being forced to it,” “Theology, Christology, Anthropology,” *IC*, 2.2, p. 212.

⁴⁰⁰ *TD* 3, 518.

⁴⁰¹ *Credo*, 31-32.

the Father and the Son to the Spirit. We are, in effect, confronted with a necessity in the order of the divine processions that unfolds as an interplay of infinite freedom among the Persons.⁴⁰²

The foregoing finds an echo in terms of the author-actor metaphor: the playwright posits the role with a definite form and within a constellation of dramatic interplay which playwright himself establishes.⁴⁰³ At the same time, he “explicitly and necessarily leaves room in his work” for a collaborating creativity on the part of the actor.⁴⁰⁴ The author gives to the actor, “not only the ‘task’ of the role, but also the ‘higher task’ of entering into the horizon of meaning that encompasses the role, for the latter is the author’s final goal....[For] while the role does, indeed, have a particular, given shape, it is in no way a limited one”.⁴⁰⁵ The author, therefore, not only “makes space” for the actor (“lets him be”) to freely interpret the role, but also “makes demand” of the actor that his representation be a correspondence to the auctorial will.

Now what we have said above implies that, from its eternal “beginning”, the Father’s generative act is always and already an act of love. The objection may be raised that the generation of the Son is solely of an intellectual nature, and that it is only with the procession of the Spirit that divine love (volition) is manifested. Balthasar sees this objection as based in part on arguments deriving from the anthropological order (along the lines of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas), and in part from the Old Testament (inasmuch as it is through his word that Yahweh instructs his people).⁴⁰⁶

Regarding the first objection, while the anthropological model based on the inner structure of the created spirit is able to show this sequence of activity as taking place within the same

⁴⁰² See *TD* IV, 77. Again in *TD* 2, 258, referring to the eternal immanent life of the Trinity: “Each of the divine Persons is just as sovereignly free as the others, although, in this freedom, each is codetermined by the *ordo processionis* and the trinitarian unity.”

⁴⁰³ See *TD* 1, 269-270, 273, 276-277, 279.

⁴⁰⁴ *TD* 1, 284.

⁴⁰⁵ *TD* 1, 279-280.

⁴⁰⁶ See *TD* 4, 329, n. 24.

spiritual being, and hence preserves the ‘immanence’ of the trinitarian life (e.g., Augustine’s triad of *memoria*, *intellectus*, and *voluntas*), at the same time, because the sequence “closes the created spirit in on itself, it is unable to show how genuine love--which is always directed toward the Other--can come about”.⁴⁰⁷ Hence Balthasar proposes another, complementary, starting point which, like the preceding, founds itself on the biblical premise that humanity is created in and as the image of God. This alternative starting point recognizes that the psychological process of self-consciousness can only be “released”, as it were, in virtue of the “original experience” [*Urerfahrung*] of being addressed by a “Thou”. This call is essentially the gift of the personal core of the “Thou” who calls, and only as such can it incite in the one called the response that moves it to a total gift of self in return, and in which responsive movement toward the “Thou”, the “I” becomes conscious of itself. As the initiating “Thou” realizes itself as lover only in its turning toward the Other with the summons of self-giving, so by virtue of this initiating self-communication the “I” of the beloved is enabled to correspond in like manner (imaging the disposition of the original “Thou”) and thereby to become itself. And yet the full realization of these two lies in a “we” that transcends their ego-identities.⁴⁰⁸ In support of this, Balthasar cites Leo Scheffczyk: “It is one of the substantial insights of modern personalist philosophy that, for its own self-being, a spiritual ‘I’ needs to be with a ‘Thou’.”⁴⁰⁹ Therefore, if we are to understand the

⁴⁰⁷ *TD* 3, 525-26. Elsewhere, in *TD* IV, 71, Balthasar notes that the revelatory truth that God is love, according to the thesis of Gregory the Great, can only be *agape*, *caritas*, if it tends toward the Other. See also Richard von Sankt-Viktor, *Die Dreieinigkeit*, übertragen von Hans Urs von Balthasar. Sammlung Christliche Meister 4 (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1980); and A. Brunner, *Dreifaltigkeit: Personale Zugänge zum Geheimnis*. Sammlung Kriterien 39 (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1976).

⁴⁰⁸ *TD* 3, 526: “So the image of God...[lies in the loving] encounter in which the ‘I’, giving itself to the ‘thou’, becomes really itself for the first time, the two being realized in a ‘we’ which transcends their egoisms.”

⁴⁰⁹ L. Scheffczyk, “Trinität, das Specificum Christianum”, in *Schwerpunkte des Glaubens* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1977), 167, cited in *TD* 3, 526, n.1. Balthasar, however, does not present the I-Thou model as a replacement of the one based on the interior unity of the spirit. Rather, he assures us: “As far as the ‘*imago Trinitatis*’ in the sphere of the spiritual creature is concerned, it can only be developed in two opposite lines of being and thought that point to each other. The one is the inner structure of the created spirit, which Augustine thoroughly explored;...[the other is the] movement from the ‘I’ to the ‘thou’ and to the fruit of this encounter....It is inappropriate, therefore,...to ban all use of the second schema, that is, to declare it impossible for the Persons within the Godhead to say ‘Thou’.

New Testament confession that *God* is “love”, and that he does not first become a lover in calling to his creature, we must assume that he has an eternally beloved “Thou” within his Godhead.

And if we consider the second objection, regarding the instructive word of Yahweh to Israel, it remains for us to realize that the word of Yahweh to Israel already supposes the gratuitous election of love. Israel’s “original experience” of Yahweh lies in Yahweh’s call of choice and of liberation, and in virtue of which call Israel becomes what it is: Yahweh’s covenant partner. It is because Yahweh elects Israel out of love without motive (Dt 7:7-9) that Israel is summoned to a response of love without reserve (Dt 6:5). The covenantal relation proceeds from the heart of the (paternal) “I” to the heart of the (filial) “Thou”.⁴¹⁰ It will require, however, the Father’s sending of the eternally beloved Son to assume the place of the creaturely (and sinful) partner for the perfect *filial* correspondence in absolute love to be accomplished, and therein also the covenant.⁴¹¹ Moreover, insofar as this perfect return of absolute love which the incarnate Son accomplishes means his making known to the world that the Son loves the Father *as the Father has loved him* (Jn 14:31; 15:9-10), it is the definitive revelation that God *is* totally love--and in the first place as Father, as the Primal Lover whose self-giving is not only unconditionally original but is also originative of the Son. It is ultimately in the light of the immanent Trinity become the economic that we can recognize Yahweh’s free election of Israel as being love from the start because it is

Conversely it is mistaken to take a naive construction of the divine mystery after the pattern of human relationships...and make it absolute....The creaturely image must be content to look in the direction of the mystery of God from its two starting points at the same time; the lines of perspective meet at an invisible point, in eternity”; *TD* 3, 525-26.

⁴¹⁰ *GL* 6, 155: “[Yahweh’s] election of this people [is one] for which no reason can be given (Dt 7:6-7), [being] without any merit on the people’s part (8:17), [and] on the basis of love alone (7:9; 10:15)...[T]he only possible response to this love is unlimited love (Dt 6:5; 11:1,13).” And *GL* 6, 185: “[T]he only answer which man can make to this love in the primal event [of the covenant] is absolute answering love, obedience, readiness to serve (Dt 10:12).”

⁴¹¹ *GL* 7, 311: “The full accomplishment of the covenant, and thus the full correspondence, becomes possible only when the immanent Trinity becomes the economic Trinity.”

grounded in the Father's self-giving that is always already an act of love, and of a love so powerful that it engenders a consubstantial "Thou" who is equally loving in reciprocal self-giving.⁴¹²

Before concluding this section, let us draw out some implications of the I-Thou relation as an *imago Trinitatis* (primordially the parent-child relation) in order to underscore the extreme relevancy which the inner-trinitarian Fatherhood of God holds for human beings. The fact that the human "I" awakens to itself--and hence "experiences its freedom, knowledge, and spiritual nature"--in the moment of its own reciprocal self-giving elicited by the loving call from the "Thou" discloses that finite freedom's original form is that of filial love.⁴¹³ Moreover, inasmuch as the human "I" experiences the "Thou's" initiative of self-giving as "the supreme good and absolutely satisfying, the *a priori* beyond which nothing higher can be expected",⁴¹⁴ (for the infant cannot yet distinguish human love from divine), later reflection can lead it to understand that its finite freedom can only be fulfilled in a definitive encounter with the "Thou" whose self-giving in love *is* absolute.⁴¹⁵ Thus, the moment of finite freedom's consummation confirms what was indicated at its awakening: that the essential form or mode of finite freedom is filial love. If this is true, finite freedom can find its ultimate explanation only in God's generative self-expressing in infinite freedom. That is, only an infinite freedom that gives itself, thereby engendering an Other in and for freedom, could be the origin and end of our finite freedom which, at its original moment of

⁴¹² Looking back upon the history of trinitarian theology, neither Origen nor the Cappadocian Fathers say or imply that the Son's generation is by way of an act of intellection--even though they mention "mind" in connection with this generation. In fact, Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, and Richard of St. Victor among others admit that in the Father's act of generating he wills the Son "concurrently" with his knowing the Son. See Edmund Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 77.

⁴¹³ "Bewegung zu Gott", *op. cit.*, 13-14. My translation.

⁴¹⁴ "Bewegung zu Gott", *op. cit.*, 14-15. My translation.

⁴¹⁵ "Bewegung zu Gott", *op. cit.*, 18-19: The human being can come to the discovery "that no worldly reality as such can bring him to the point of absolute salvation, but rather that absolute love can turn toward him only from itself and in freedom. But this cannot be derived with necessity from the world of nature, since 'grace' cannot be postulated by 'nature'. Nevertheless,...[the infant's 'original experience' of the human 'Thou'] implies a promise written in nature itself--a promise that this free fulfilling of every worldly and existential aspiration, in the definitive

activation and at its definitive moment of consummation, shows its essential structure to be receptive/reciprocal self-giving. Because of its finitude, however, creaturely freedom cannot be the absolute beloved of the Absolute Thou. It cannot of itself respond to the latter's summons with an equally absolute love. Accordingly, a real reciprocity of freedoms between God and the human person must have as the condition for its possibility a real reciprocity between absolute paternal freedom and absolute filial freedom, a reciprocity originating in and engendered by the intra-trinitarian Father. Theology, says Balthasar,

begins when, addressed as "thou", I hearken to the One who thus addresses me, ...[the One who in] infinite freedom eternally gives itself away and thus generates the Son...."This day I have begotten you", says the Father to the Son. This day I have created you, says eternal freedom to finite freedom. The fact that no human "I" can awaken to itself unless it is called "thou" by some other "I" is only the prelude, within the parameters of the world, to what is meant here:...an Absolute "I", who has from all eternity generated an equally Absolute "Thou" and, in the Holy Spirit, is One God with him.⁴¹⁶

Implied in what we have said thus far is that finite freedom (according to the norm of its origin and end) coincides with (filial) love, and that this coincidence reflects in the order of the creature its primal source: God the Father, whose infinite freedom of self-disposing coincides with (paternal) love.

Yet there is another coincidence, one of a paradoxical character, that is inscribed in the nature of finite freedom and which, as a creaturely analogue, directs us to perceive its archetypal ground once again in the Father: namely, that there is a certain necessity that accompanies the gift of freedom. Inasmuch as finite freedom is essentially filial in mode, this (creaturely, hence non-absolute) coincidence of necessity and freedom plays itself out in the dramatic form of a freedom that is simultaneously a being-determined and a self-determining. As Augustine clearly saw, "in

encounter with love--in brief, salvation--will be realized one day." (I have slightly modified the translation provided in *Rdr*, 68.)

⁴¹⁶ *TD* 2, 286-87.

order to be free, [finite freedom] is subject to ‘the eternal law imprinted within it’.”⁴¹⁷ Balthasar extends this insight to its foundation in the Trinity: “It [finite freedom] can only be what it is, that is, an image of infinite freedom, imbued with a freedom of its own, by getting in tune with the (trinitarian) ‘law’ of absolute freedom (of self-surrender).”⁴¹⁸ This law, however, is not a foreign or extrinsic imposition, although it is a law so transcendent that finite freedom can in no way be said to devise it. Indeed, it is precisely because this law--which is that of infinite freedom itself--is both transcendent to and immanent in finite freedom, that finite freedom is rendered capable of attaining its fulfillment. “[Finite freedom] can only genuinely realize [itself]...if it acknowledges the presence of the Giver in the gift of freedom and, furthermore, if it acknowledges that the realm it penetrates [i.e., the infinite freedom of trinitarian self-surrender]--as a finite entity, through self-transcendence--is not its own property but a realm given to it by the Giver....[S]ince finite freedom, in stepping over into this realm, is taken beyond itself, its very act will be codetermined by the act-quality of infinite freedom.”⁴¹⁹ Now the primal Giver of freedom is the Father, “whose nature, from all eternity, is to give himself to the eternal Son, the prototype of creation.”⁴²⁰ We ought to expect, therefore, to find in the inner-trinitarian Fatherhood of God the condition for the possibility of a creaturely freedom at once determined and self-determining.

And this is in fact confirmed when we refer back to our remarks on the identity of freedom and necessity in the Father’s eternal begetting of the Son. For there we saw that as an act of absolute self-giving, it is determined by nothing other than itself, albeit it “coincides with the

⁴¹⁷ *TD* 2, 222. Balthasar is quoting from Augustine’s *Lib. arb.*, I, 6, 15. Also *TD* 2, 284: “[F]inite freedom can only be made possible by infinite freedom; consequently it can only fulfill itself, as finite freedom, within infinite freedom. In its finitude it has a ‘whence’ and a ‘whither’.”

⁴¹⁸ *TD* 2, 259.

⁴¹⁹ *TD* 2, 314.

⁴²⁰ The full text reads: The creature endowed with finite freedom must come “to see himself [his finite freedom] in the primal radiance of the absolute gift: in the God whose nature, from all eternity, is to give himself to the eternal Son, the prototype of creation”; *TD* 2, 285.

[absolute] act-quality of [God's] essence" and so can be nothing other than it is.⁴²¹ Still, since the human being with its finite freedom is not created in the locus of the Father but in that of the Son, we need move on to acknowledge that the Father's self-donation begets its counterpart mode in the Son such that the coincidence of necessity and freedom takes on an asymmetrical relation over against the Father. This too was indicated above when we noted that the Father's self-surrender is originative of a "*Nezessitäts-willen*" that constitutes itself as a hierarchical order in the absolute freedom of the divine Persons, and which identity of necessity and freedom appears in the begotten Son (the prototypical mode of creaturely freedom) as both a being-determined by and a self-disposing toward the Father.⁴²² When, therefore, the divine Son assumes a human nature with its creaturely freedom, he is aware simultaneously of the divine 'must' or '*dei*' that determines his mission (Lk 2:49; 13:14; Jn 9:4; Mt 16:21), as well as of his own "sovereign disposition of self".⁴²³ We shall have more to say about this ahead.

C. The paternal kenosis

Now the Father's eternal initiative of self-giving may be designated as the original kenosis [*Ur-Kenosis*] of absolute love. For it is premierly God the Father who, in generating the consubstantial Son, does not grasp the divinity to himself but empties himself without remainder. The Father, says Balthasar (following the thought of Sergei Bulgakov),⁴²⁴ expropriates [*enteignet*] himself of his divinity and delivers it over [*übereignet*] to the Son. He does not give to the Son merely a portion, but entrusts to the Son all that is his ("All that is yours is mine", Jn 17:10). Nor does he exist as the first divine Person "before" this kenotic self-surrender, as if in a "prior"

⁴²¹ *TD* 2, 256; see also *GL* 7, 17.

⁴²² See *TD* IV, 77; also *TD* 2, 258 and 268.

⁴²³ *MP*, 18: "Despite the divine 'must' which determines his journey, all of this takes place in perfect freedom, in a sovereign disposition of self. The Gospel of John is also dominated by this 'must' (3:14;20:9;12:34), which at the same time is sovereign freedom (10:18;14:31b;18:11)." See also *TD* 3, 225.

disposition of conserving for himself the wealth of the divinity. Rather, “he *is* this movement of self-giving that holds nothing back”.⁴²⁵

We shall never know how to express the abyss-like depths of the Father’s self-giving...[which is] an eternal “super-Kenosis”⁴²⁶....Everything that can be thought and imagined where God is concerned is, in advance, included and transcended in this self-destitution which constitutes the Person of the Father, and, at the same time, those of the Son and the Spirit.⁴²⁷

Here, in what concerns the mystery of this paternal “super-kenosis”, we arrive at the deepest root of the paradoxical character of theo-logic: for “we cannot say the Father gives over his substance in generating the Son in such a manner that, as he hands it over to the Son, he does not retain it at the same time; otherwise he would really cease to be the divine substance (Fourth Lateran Synod, DS 805)”.⁴²⁸ Both must be held simultaneously and as identical: on the one hand, the authentic self-giving-over engaging the totality of the Father who entrusts himself; and on the other, the eternal integrity of the Person who *is* the divine substance only in this delivering-over.⁴²⁹ Far from dis-integrating (in the sense of extinguishing himself) by emptying himself, God is always Father (and the Father is always “God”, that is, the whole divine essence) precisely in this primal giving of self.⁴³⁰ It is imperative, therefore, that we understand Balthasar’s attribution of “kenosis” to God the Father as embracing within its signification the indissoluble and strictly simultaneous unity of self-expropriation and self-possession in the premier hypostatic mode of being God [*Gottsein*].

⁴²⁴ Balthasar acknowledges his dependence on Bulgakov’s work, *Le Verbe incarné: Agnus Dei* (Paris: Aubier, 1943) in *TD* 4, 313-14 and 323.

⁴²⁵ *TD* 4, 323.

⁴²⁶ It merits reiterating that Balthasar attributes the concept of “kenosis” to the immanent tri-Personal event of love upon the basis of God’s definitive self-revelation in the paschal event of Jesus Christ, while being careful to maintain a distinction between the two orders of event. Hence, his usage of the qualification “supra” in this passage signifies that “kenosis” is predicated of the inner trinitarian event analogically, not univocally.

⁴²⁷ *MP*, viii.

⁴²⁸ *TD* IV, 75. My translation.

⁴²⁹ See *ibid*.

⁴³⁰ See *TD* 4, 325; and *TD* 2, 256.

Let us note that the language which Balthasar employs here in speaking of the Father's way of being is evidence of the ontological framework within which Balthasar considers the mystery of God's Paternity: a scripturally-inspired trinitarian ontology of love, to borrow a phrase from G.F. O'Hanlon.⁴³¹ The ITC refers to this framework as a "metaphysic of charity".⁴³² This ontological framework – this interpersonal paradigm – permits into its purview certain paradoxes associated in Balthasar's thought with this unoriginated "super-kenosis". Just above we noted the unity of self-expropriation and self-possession in God the Father.

Now another closely associated paradox is that, in the Fatherhood of God, being-oneself and being-for-another are inseparable.⁴³³ "Inherent in the Father's love", says Balthasar, "is an absolute renunciation [*Verzicht*]: he will not be God for himself alone. He lets go [*ein Loslassen*] of his divinity" in favor of the Son.⁴³⁴ This primal kenotic movement bespeaks a paternal disposition that is utterly selfless, indeed self-renunciatory. Ratzinger provides an abbreviated version of this multi-faceted paradox when he affirms that "only in being-for the other is he Father,"⁴³⁵ and we find the same maintained by Balthasar in the following:

God is never first and foremost for himself: from all eternity he is there for the Other. God only exists as Father in his eternal act of self-surrender to the Son....In God, self-emptying coincides with self-being....In God, the paternal act of generating the Son coincides with the Father's Person.⁴³⁶

[I]t is precisely in this infinite surrender and self-renunciation, in this absolute preference of the Thou to the I, that the life of the Trinity consists....The Father only

⁴³¹ See G.F. O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*.

⁴³² As we noted at the outset of Part Two, a "metaphysic of charity" is recommended by the International Theological Commission in its 1981 document "Theology, Christology, Anthropology", I, D, pp. 212-14. See in particular the proposal of David L. Schindler, who attempts to locate relation in the *esse* of the human person: "Norris Clarke on Person, Being, and St. Thomas", *Communio* 20 (Fall, 1993), 580-92. Also John D. Zizioulas, in accord with the Cappadocian theological tradition, argues that the proper mode of existence for substances is within a hypostasis understood relationally. See his *Being as Communion*.

⁴³³ In *TD* 2, 203, Balthasar identifies "being-for-oneself" and "being-for-another" as "two forms of human unity [that]...are inseparable". Soon thereafter he acknowledges that this human unity "is actually an image of the three-personal God": *ibid.*, 210; see also 206.

⁴³⁴ *TD* 4, 323-24. See *MP*, viii.

⁴³⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Intro.*, 131.

⁴³⁶ *YCY*, 159.

is, as he who generates the Son, he who surrenders and pours himself out in the Son; and the Son is, only as he who utterly surrenders himself to the Father, acknowledging himself to be the Father's glory and image; the Spirit is, only as witnessing and expressing the love between the Father and the Son, and proceeding from them.⁴³⁷

[Within God there is] a first "kenosis" of the Father, expropriating himself by "generating" the consubstantial Son....[Accordingly,] the Son could not be consubstantial with the Father except by self-expropriation; and their "We", that is, the Spirit,...does not want anything "for himself" but, as his revelation in the world shows, wants simply to be the pure manifestation and communication of the love between Father and Son (Jn 14:26; 16:13-15).⁴³⁸

As is so often the case with Balthasar who takes a spiral-like approach to expounding the Christian mysteries, in the passages cited directly above we find that in remarking on the kenotic self-renunciation inherent in divine three-personed love, he inevitably returns to the subject of the identity of freedom and necessity as it originates in the Father.⁴³⁹ If the unity of freedom and necessity exists in the Father as inherent in his unoriginated way of being God, this unity exists in a begotten way in the consubstantially divine Son. For it belongs to the original hypostatic mode of divinity (itself undetermined by *a priori* prescriptions from Being) to establish, if you will, the essence of its pure act as an event of trinitarian love.⁴⁴⁰ Inasmuch as the divine essence, coinciding as it does with the absolute freedom of the Father's self-disposing, proceeds from the Father as self-emptying in favor of the Other, the Son "cannot, for his part, *be and possess* the absolute essence of God except in the mode of receiving this unity" of wealth and poverty, of being-oneself and being-for-another.⁴⁴¹ As the Beloved who receives the Father's surrender of all that is his, the Son is

⁴³⁷ *W&R2*, 33-34.

⁴³⁸ *TD 4*, 331. In addition, see *YCY*, 230.

⁴³⁹ Ever vigilant that his own position on the subject of freedom and necessity in God should not be simply equated with that of Hegel or Moltmann, Balthasar takes care to point out that the Father's primal kenotic movement, while constitutive of the Father's distinct Person, is not a movement toward self-realization in the Hegelian sense. Balthasar does not intend to suggest that there is in God a movement from potency to act. He asserts to the contrary that "the life of the Trinity must not under any circumstances be described as a 'becoming' (since, despite the order of origin, Father, Son, and Spirit are coeternal)," *TD 2*, p. 261.

⁴⁴⁰ See *TD 2*, 255.

⁴⁴¹ *TD 4*, 325-26. Emphasis Balthasar's.

begotten as equal in all to the Father and in this sense possesses the full wealth of the divinity. But since this wealth as it is originally defined by the Father can only be possessed in loving self-dispossession, the Son manifests his consubstantiality with the Father only in reciprocally surrendering all to the Father.⁴⁴² Similarly, as the Father is himself only in giving of himself entirely vis-à-vis the Son, so the Son can be himself only as answering to the Father's love in giving likewise, whereby the Son demonstrates that in him the synthesis of self-being and being-for-another proceeds from the Father.⁴⁴³ Clearly what is emerging from Balthasar's speculations on the Trinitarian Father is a conception of the *determinative* role of his "supra-kenosis". Balthasar's words merit repeating here (though they were quoted in chapter II, D.3):

Only in holding-onto-nothing-for-himself is God Father at all; he pours forth his substance and generates the Son; and only in the holding-on-to-nothing-for-himself of what has been received does the Son show himself to be of the same essence of the Father, and in this shared holding-onto-nothing-for-themselves are they one in the Spirit, who is, after all, the expression and personification of this holding-onto-nothing-for-himself of God and the eternal new beginning and eternal product of this ceaselessly flowing movement. If the Second Person steps out of this circling life in order to offer the world what is the totality of God, his style of life will not be the grasping demeanor of a pantocrator but the opposite: the Son lays bare the heart of the Father as he becomes the servant of all and breathes out into the world his Spirit of service and of the last place.⁴⁴⁴

The unoriginated kenosis of the Father "expands to a kenosis involving the whole Trinity".⁴⁴⁵ Indeed it is ultimately the Father's kenosis that "makes possible all other kenotic movements of God into the world": the kenosis of creation, of covenant, and of Incarnation.⁴⁴⁶

This determinative function of the Father's primal kenosis needs to be taken into account in a "Balthasarian" interpretation of the Christological hymn in the Letter to the Philippians (2:6-11).

⁴⁴² See *TD* 3, 518-19; and *TD* 2, 258.

⁴⁴³ This synthesis assumes in the Son the distinctly filial form "of self-being and consciously acknowledged dependence"; *TD* 2, 268.

⁴⁴⁴ *Rdr*, 27 (= *Pneuma und Institution*, Einsiedeln, 1974, 114f.). See *CSL*, 186.

⁴⁴⁵ *TD* 4, 331.

⁴⁴⁶ *TD* 4, 331. And *ibid.*, 323: "[T]he Father's self-utterance in the generation of the Son is an initial 'kenosis' within the Godhead that underpins all subsequent kenosis."

For, as we have seen, Balthasar understands the “form of God” which the Son possesses as always already constituted by the Father’s self-disposing to the form and measure of emptying oneself of all for the sake of the Other. In deeming his equality with God not a thing to be grasped, the Son is acknowledging himself to be the Father’s glory and image. Accordingly, the Son’s (economic) kenosis is an act of “obediential” self-disposing: of readiness to go to the ultimate lengths that the Father’s “ordinance of love” may dispose.⁴⁴⁷ It is a filial self-disposing as one disposed of according to the archetypal disposition of all love: the Father. Indeed this is why the Son’s total self-outpouring on the Cross is “to the glory of God the Father” (v. 11), for it is a filial correspondence begotten by, as a perfect imaging of, the kenotic self-giving of the Father.

The same insight into the determinative nature of the Father’s primal way of being God is affirmed by Balthasar in the context of his theological aesthetics. The one divine essence is “an infinitely determined super-form” that is constituted as the eternal event of mutual kenotic self-giving between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴⁸ The Father’s kenosis “is not ‘act without image’”, but on the contrary, is love that produces “image and bestows shape absolutely”.⁴⁴⁹ It is the Father who originally determines the “super-form” of the divine essence as the (covenantal) event of trinitarian love. Should the eternal Godhead deign to communicate itself in the dispensation of creation/salvation, its *ad extra* self-giving will be in accord with the laws (denoting sequence and order, form-quality, etc.) of the divine inner-trinitarian life.

But with the recognition of the *determinative* nature of the Father’s “kenosis”, the question arises as to how this can be reconciled with Balthasar’s notion of the *dramatic* character of the eternal event of generation in God, for indeed Balthasar insists that the Father be regarded as the

⁴⁴⁷ UYB, 31.

⁴⁴⁸ GL 1, 432. GL7, 311: “In God, the relationship of the Father and the Son in the Spirit of God *is* his very being.” On the “super-form” within the Godhead, see also GL 7, 17 and 22.

⁴⁴⁹ GL 1, 424.

“original actor”⁴⁵⁰ whose kenotic self-disposing “sets the stage”, as it were, for the “primal divine drama” [*Urdrama Gottes*].⁴⁵¹ (Let us grant that any answer remains incomplete until after we have examined the modalities of leaving-free, receptivity, expectation, and affectivity, which Balthasar considers to be constituent of the Father’s inner-divine generative act.) In order to appreciate Balthasar’s conception of the primal divine drama of Trinitarian life, we must keep in mind that his Trinitarian doctrine bespeaks a shift in interpretive frameworks: from a substance-based ontology given expression within a framework of analytical logic as these components governed medieval theological discourse, to an intersubjective ontology given exposition according to the “logic of love” and the “*analogia caritatis*”. Consider, for instance, Balthasar’s application of the term “other” to the eternally begotten Son of the Father. The Father-Begetter communicates the fullness of divinity in such a way, says Balthasar, that the Son is begotten as “the infinitely Other *of the Father*”.⁴⁵² Indeed, Balthasar displays a penchant for employing the formulas “other *to*” or “other *of*” when speaking of the Son in relation to the Father. If Scholastic treatises on the Trinity tended to confine consideration of the term “other” to the context of analytical and logical thought (in defining the signification of the term “other” and then affirming the appropriateness of its being predicated of the consubstantial Son), Balthasar extends his own considerations beyond the order of signification to that of *significance*, in illuminating the import of the trinitarian Son as “other” in terms of the “*logic of love*”. Within the latter framework, it is possible to see the “otherness” of the begotten Son as referring back to the self-renunciation inherent in the Father’s kenotic act of self-expression, since the Father does not clone his own “I”, but genuinely establishes a “not-I”, a “Thou”, who is affirmed as Other with the unconditionedness of the Father’s generative volition. Kenosis and otherness are thus two “nots” in the eternal life of the immanent Trinity that are

⁴⁵⁰ *MP*, 136.

⁴⁵¹ *TD* 4, 325.

wholly positive, and that have their ultimate source in the Father's way of being divine love. For it is the Father's original "*not* holding on" to the divine nature but giving it over that generates the Son who is "*not* the Father", or what comes to the same thing, the Son who is the Beloved *Other* of the Father.⁴⁵³

Now the Father's begetting the Son as his "Beloved Thou" or "Infinitely Other" involves at the same time, "the positing of an absolute, infinite 'distance' [*Abstand*]" between himself and the Son,⁴⁵⁴ which Balthasar calls alternately "separation", "opposition", "difference" and "distinction".⁴⁵⁵ Here again such language is due to a shift in conceptual frameworks (from a substance-based ontology to an ontology of interpersonal love). Precisely this shift is indicated by Balthasar when he states his reasons for employing the term "distance" in trinitarian doctrine.

First, it is a question of that distance required for an interplay of personal freedom. Balthasar considers that if "God the Father can give his divinity away in such a manner that...the Son's possession of it is 'equally substantial'," then this implies "a unique and incomprehensible 'separation' [*Trennung*] of God from himself".⁴⁵⁶ As was the case with the "nots" of inner-divine kenosis and otherness, so too for Balthasar this predication of "distance" or "separation" possesses an entirely positive sense (ruling out both Arian and Hegelian interpretations). It is this distance, speaking figuratively, which permits the reciprocal exchange or dialogue between the Father and the Son in the unity of the Spirit that constitutes the eternal drama of the Trinity. In other words, the distance of personal op-position is necessary for a life of inter-personal intimacy. "The hypostatic modes of being constitute the greatest imaginable opposition one to another, in order

⁴⁵² *TD* 4, 325. Emphasis Balthasar's.

⁴⁵³ *TD* 2, p. 261.

⁴⁵⁴ *TD* 4, 323.

⁴⁵⁵ See, for example, *TD* 2, 261, 268; *TD* 4, 325, 326, 327, 333; *TD* IV, 82, 83; and *Rdr*, 135, 200.

⁴⁵⁶ *TD* 4, 325.

that they can mutually interpenetrate in the most intimate manner conceivable.”⁴⁵⁷ *Circumincessio* is the word traditionally used to denote the mutual interpenetration of the divine Persons, and Balthasar here allies himself once again with the (predominantly) Eastern approach to this mystery which views the reciprocal immanence of the hypostases primarily in terms of their dynamic and vital presence to each other (rather than in terms of the oneness of essence inasmuch as it is identical with each of the Persons). According to St. John of Damascus, “they [the divine hypostases] are made one not so as to commingle, but so as to cleave to each other without any coalescence or commingling”.⁴⁵⁸ For Balthasar, that the Son is “made one” with the Father, precisely “so as to cleave to” the Father “without any coalescence”, not only rules out an antithetical opposition in God between distance and nearness, distinction and intimacy, but also underscores the necessity of such a distance “in order to maintain the personal peculiarity in the being and acting of each Person”.⁴⁵⁹

Secondly, without this personal “distance” between the begetting Father and begotten Son, it would be impossible to understand the creature’s self-standingness vis-à-vis the Father-Creator, or in other words, the creature’s vocation to a covenant relationship with God as “sons in the Son”. And thirdly, it is necessary to speak of a distance posited by the Father’s generative act in order to establish within the eternal Trinity the condition for the possibility of the “economic” distance between the Father who sends and the Son who is sent, even unto the latter’s taking the place of sinners in their estrangement from and abandonment by the Father. The sin-conditioned distance between God the Father and his creaturely covenant partner which is assumed by the incarnate Son *pro nobis* serves to signal that there is in the trinitarian relations something like a distance that allows for mutuality in self-disposing.

⁴⁵⁷ *TD* 2, 268.

⁴⁵⁸ *De fide orth.*, I, 8, PG94, 829.

For the “incarnation of God” to be possible in a Christian sense, God [the Son] must be able to come to our side without leaving his own “side”; but this opposition presupposes essentially that eternal opposition of which we spoke when considering the life of love within the Godhead....[The Son] goes not only into that which is “other” than himself, into the creature, but also into that which is contrary to himself as he gathers into himself the sin and the lostness and so the abandonment by God of his creature, and takes it upon himself. He does not thereby cease to be himself; indeed he shows precisely through this what he is in himself....God can be dead without ceasing to be eternal life and he can, acting in this manner, prove finally that he is life and love...and the goodness which pours itself out in selfless self-giving....The heart is pierced, its spring uncovered, water and blood pour forth [from the farthest depths of divine love, whose fountain-head is the Father].⁴⁶⁰

Elsewhere Balthasar remarks that “by this very power [which the Son exhibits] in identifying himself...with his complete opposite, God the Father recognizes the ‘equality of being’, the divinity of the one he has sent”.⁴⁶¹ Given the hermeneutic of our study, what is warranted here is once again our advancing beyond the Christocentric formulation to a theocentric one, or more precisely, to one which explicates the patrogen(n)etic dynamic at work

Since the divinity of the Son (the “form of God” given him) is always already defined according to the Father’s generative self-outpouring, it can be said that the Son’s economic kenosis is the image of its archetypal source: the paternal kenosis of God. It is indeed by virtue of the Father who is able to deliver himself to the Son’s “side” in generating the infinitely Other, without leaving his own “side” or ceasing to be himself--since in his act of begetting, the Father retains the absolute integrity of his distinct Person in the fullness of the divine substance--that the Son likewise can pour himself out in his opposite, assuming a human nature (infinitely distant from his mode of divine being) even to the extreme of taking on humanity’s condition of sinful alienation,

⁴⁵⁹ *TD IV*, 83. My translation.

⁴⁶⁰ *Rdr*, 200 [=Klarstellungen,45]. And *GL* 7, 215: “[I]f it is true that the coming to light of the inner-trinitarian mystery in the dispensation of salvation lets us see something of the law of the immanent Trinity[...], if the mystery of the divine love is once disclosed in Jesus Christ, then we may argue that God could do what he did in reality do, and that this self-abasement and self-emptying were no contradiction of his own essence, but corresponded precisely to this essence, in a way that could never have been thought of....In all this, there is ‘no antimony, no division’ in God; by ‘doing such a thing, he proves to us that he *can* do it, that it is absolutely in his *nature* to do such a thing.’” (Inner citation is from K. Barth, *KD*, IV/1, 185ff.) See also *TD IV*, 83.

without ceasing to be the eternal and absolute Beloved who perfectly corresponds to the Father's will.⁴⁶²

Can we not, moreover, discern in the Son's "exchange of place" with sinners (the *admirabile commercium*) a Christological synthesis of transcendence and immanence (so also distance and nearness, distinction and intimacy) vis-à-vis sinners, a synthesis that is intrinsic to the Son's function as the absolute norm of human existence, and which synthesis also can be said to originate in the Father? For in positing a relationship of mutual exchange between himself and the Son, the generating Father is at once "transcendent" to and "immanent" in his Beloved for whom he is the primal archetype: "transcendent" insofar as the Father's mode of self-disposing originally establishes and determines the (hierarchical) event of tri-Personal love ("the Father is greater", Jn 14:28); "immanent" insofar as the Father's act of self-giving-over engenders "from within" the Son's act of reciprocation ("it is the Father who lives in me accomplishing his works", Jn 14:10). If, then, it belongs premierly to the unoriginated *generative* mode of divine love to "take the other's place" in surrendering all that is his so that the other can receive, live from, and reciprocate this donation, it becomes entirely appropriate to look upon the Son in his *commercium* vis-à-vis mankind "as the *begetter* of his Church" (cf. Jn 1:12), so long as we perceive his empowering of us to become children of God as (primarily) his being empowered by the Father, and hence as "the

⁴⁶¹ *Rdr*, 171.

⁴⁶² We cite the following from *Rdr*, 180, which discusses the Father's kenosis as generative principle and archetypal form of the Son's: "The divine Father is actually the inexhaustible, externally flowing source of the divinity, but yet in such a way that in his paternal act of generation he keeps nothing of the divinity back for himself, nothing that he has not always entrusted to the Son, *which is why* the Son, as the perfectly responding image of the Father, *likewise can* keep nothing back for himself that he does not gratefully and willingly offer back to the Father." Emphasis mine. On the incarnate Son's "inner appropriation of what is ungodly and hostile to God" while remaining "essentially bound to the Father in loving obedience", see *TD* 4, 334-35 and 337-38.

It is N. Hoffmann, in his essay "Trinity and the Cross", who offers a further distinction between the kenotic intra-trinitarian life and the incarnate Son's atoning representation of sinners before the Father. "The 'instead of' proper to the cross finds no direct parallel within trinitarian life: neither the Logos is 'Son' nor the first Person 'Father' in the place of the other" (255). "The representation evidenced in the cross would have no direct analogy in the intra-trinitarian realm but finds there only the presupposition which provides its very ground and possibility" (257). We will have more to say about this distinction in chapter III, G.2.

‘economic’ representation of *the Father’s trinitarian, loving self-surrender*”.⁴⁶³ Indeed, all the key Scriptural depictions of the *commercium* acquire “an adequate theological foundation” when interpreted against the background of the immanent Trinity:⁴⁶⁴ doing so enables us to see that the dramatic action of the Son who “takes our place”--the Son who, though he was rich became poor for our sake, so that we might become rich by his poverty (2Cor 8:9), the Sinless One who is made to be sin so that in him we might become the holiness of God (2Cor 5:21), the Word who becomes flesh so that we might become sharers of the divine nature (Jn 1:14; 2Pt 1:4)--has as its primal principle and revelatory content the eternal Father’s kenotic exchange vis-à-vis the Son. “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you” (Jn 15:9).

It is outside the limits of this study to discuss the more strictly Christological problems associated with the twofold nature of the Son’s mediatorship: his representing the Father over against mankind, and his representing mankind over against the Father. Let it suffice for us to acknowledge with Balthasar that it is proper to the Son and not the Father to “exchange places” with mankind (in the sense of taking on a human nature) precisely because, paradoxically, the Son “does not need to change his own ‘place’ when...he undertakes to represent the world”.⁴⁶⁵ For since there is nothing outside God,⁴⁶⁶ the world cannot have any other locus but in the hypostasis begotten as the infinitely Other of the Father. “The world”, says Balthasar, “can only be created within the Son’s ‘generation’;...[accordingly,] only in the Son can the world be ‘recapitulated’.”⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶³ TD 4, 332: “[T]he *commercium* is now firmly based on...*the Son’s self-surrender*, insofar as the latter is the ‘economic’ representation of *the Father’s trinitarian, loving self-surrender*.” Emphasis Balthasar’s. And UYB, 64: “[If] it is he [the Son] who, in a certain way, is to be looked upon as the begetter of his Church..., nevertheless he in no manner comes to substitute for his Father but rather represents unsurpassably for us the Father’s paternal qualities.”

⁴⁶⁴ TD 4, 333.

⁴⁶⁵ TD 4, 334.

⁴⁶⁶ We mean by this that all finite reality exists *in* the creative act of God who is *ipsum esse per se subsistens*.

⁴⁶⁷ TD 4, 326. “The infinite distance between the world and God is grounded in the other, prototypical distance between God and God”; TD 2, 266. “According to the great Scholastics, the inner-divine processions are the condition of possibility for a creation”; MP, viii. Indeed, “creation lives by this reciprocity [this exchange] in God”; YCY, 143.

Thus, on the one hand, we can argue that since mankind is created and called in the “place” of the Son, it belongs to the Son alone to “take man’s place”, to represent mankind before the Father; on the other hand, we can contend that the Son “can do this on the basis of his *topos*, that is, of his absolute distinction, within the Trinity, from the Father who bestows the Godhead”.⁴⁶⁸ As for the Son’s representation of the Father before mankind, this too is grounded in the Son’s inner-trinitarian “representation” of the Father as his consubstantial Image.

In the climactic scene of the drama of redemption the form which the Son’s (twofold) representation assumes is that of his self-sacrificial death. Here, “in the form of existence unto death”, the crucified Son of God “is the ultimate form in which God and the world meet”.⁴⁶⁹ Balthasar might well have cited the passage from *Gaudium et Spes* (#22): “Christ the Lord, Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling,”⁴⁷⁰ but Balthasar would be sure to insist that the believer who seeks to understand these mysteries must keep his eyes fixed on the dying Son, Christ crucified (Mk 15:39; Jn 19:37).

From here at least two questions arise, both of which require an elucidation of the kenotic disposition of God the Father as the ultimate presupposition for what in fact occurs in this consummate moment of the Son’s mission. We need ask first: how is it that in taking upon himself man’s death (as the “wages of sin”, Rom 6:23) before God, the Son perfectly interprets for us the Father, who is the source of life eternal? Or, expressed slightly differently: how is it that in entering into death, the Son does not cease to be eternal life--eternal life, that is, in the personal mode of self-giving-over as begotten by the Father? Second, how is it that in his dying the

⁴⁶⁸ *TD* 4, 334. See also *TD* 4, 333, and *TD* 2, 260f., 266, 302.

⁴⁶⁹ *GL* 1, 673.

incarnate Son reveals the “most high calling” of the human person? (Our discussion of the former question, which asks after the condition for the possibility of the Son taking on man’s sin-conditioned death, must be extended into the next section, D.)

When one considers that Balthasar, in conceiving of the personal mode of God the Father, employs the *analogia caritatis*, it comes as no surprise that he describes the Father’s original kenosis as a “supra-death” [*Über-Tod*] that is identical with absolute love and life. Balthasar agrees with Ferdinand Ulrich that “life is genuinely lively only to the measure...of its surpassing beyond itself....It is rich only to the measure of its self-impoverishing, that is, according to the measure of its love”.⁴⁷¹ Ratzinger offers a brief account of this insight when, in his work *Principles of Catholic Theology*, he considers “the deeper mystery of life and death that *is* love itself. The Yes of love for another involves a far-reaching renunciation of self. Only if one risks this giving of oneself to another, only if existence is, as it were, first given away can great love ensue.”⁴⁷² If a death-like dynamic can be discerned as a component of love within our experience--”from self-forgetfulness in favor of the beloved right up to that highest love by which a man ‘gives his life for his friends’”--it is because there is in God its “trinitarian prototype”--indeed a paternal archetype.⁴⁷³ The Father’s generative kenosis is a limitless self-sacrifice [*Selbst-losigkeit*] for the sake of the Beloved, a pure self-forgetting [*Sichvergessen*] in which the Father surrenders all that is his so that the Son receives the fullness of eternal life. As an act of self-abandonment [*Selbstpreisgabe*] that generates a Beloved Thou infinitely distinct/distant from his own I, the Father’s

⁴⁷⁰ *Gaudium et Spes* in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, Revised Edition, ed. by Austin Flannery, OP, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), no. 22.

⁴⁷¹ Ferdinand Ulrich, *Leben in der Einheit von Leben und Tod* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1973), 29-30, cited by Balthasar in *TD IV*, 74. My translation.

⁴⁷² J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 33.

⁴⁷³ *TD IV*, 74. G. Harrison’s translation.

self-disposing “takes seriously the separation” of Lover and Beloved: by virtue of the Father’s kenotic going-”under” [“*unter*”-*gehen*] the Other rises-”up” [“*auf*”-*gehen*] in himself.⁴⁷⁴

There is a passage in which Balthasar explicitly connects the Father’s kenotic (“death”-like) self-giving with our human (including sin-conditioned) dying, a passage that has as its larger context the crucified Christ as the point of intersection, so to speak, between God and humanity.

When the Father surrenders himself unreservedly to the Son,...do we not find here the archetype of the most beautiful dying in the midst of eternal life? Is this final state of “not wanting to exist for oneself” [but renouncing oneself for the other] not precisely the prerequisite for the most blessed life? Into this most living “higher dying” our own wretched dying is taken up and resolved, so that everything human - its being saved, its living, its dying--is thenceforth securely integrated into a life that no longer knows any limits.⁴⁷⁵

Certainly it is the dying of the incarnate Son (the Father does not become human) that redemptively integrates human death into the eternal life of God. This death of Jesus is in every respect--”both toward the world and toward God--a function of self-giving love...[and] the act of dying remains as the dying of one who loves,...as a form in which the [utmost] living love can manifest itself ‘to the end’ (Jn 13:1)”.⁴⁷⁶ We must avoid finding in this mystery a scandal as did the Gnostics, who could not take the expressive form of Jesus’ suffering and dying seriously, and thus, “were totally blind not only to the man Jesus but to the love of God in all the depth of its reality”. Of all the New Testament writers it is John who confronts head-on this gnostic opposition. For him, Jesus’ crucifixion is offered as “the creaturely form...transparent to the love of God himself”.⁴⁷⁷ “When you have lifted up the Son of Man [on the Cross], then you will know that I AM and that I do nothing of myself”, (Jn 8:28). Since this is essentially an assertion that his dying on the Cross is

⁴⁷⁴ TD IV, 74. The term “‘unter’-gehen” has as one of its meanings “to perish, or to sink”.

⁴⁷⁵ *Credo*, 59-60.

⁴⁷⁶ “Death is swallowed up by Life”, *Communio* 14 (Spring, 1987), 54. Balthasar makes similar remarks in *Credo*, 53-54: “He [Christ] has died purely from love, from divine-human love; indeed, his death was the supreme act of that love, and love is the most living thing there is. Thus his really being dead...is also an act of his most living love.” See also TD 4, 500.

⁴⁷⁷ GL 1, 672.

the human realization of the Son's divine disposition as consubstantial Image of the Father (Jesus as the concrete *analogia caritatis*)--indeed, his dying is the "final work" that gives perfect and definitive glory to the Father (Jn 13:31; 17:4f.)⁴⁷⁸--what is disclosed in the Son's economic self-sacrifice is that the latter is possible only because there is an eternal inner-trinitarian dynamic of mutual self-giving-over between the Father and the Son "originating in the *Father's* sacrificial gift of life".⁴⁷⁹ Thus the greatest love to which the Son witnesses--"there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13)--is primarily "the trinitarian love of the Father for the Son". We can with the Johannine Jesus even speak of the Father as "greater" (Jn 14:28), inasmuch as it is the Father's initiatory love which engenders the equally limitless self-surrender of the Son. In effect, the love with which the Son "lays down his life for his sheep" (Jn 10:11-18) is his imaging or interpreting "for us" the love of the Father, who is "first" in laying down all that *he* is in his act of begetting the Son. John Cardinal Newman points to this mystery when he remarks: "Now I understand why Christ died for me: because he loved me as a father loves his son, and that not merely as a human father but as the eternal Father loved his eternal Son."⁴⁸⁰

With respect to Jesus' humanity, moreover, his act of self-sacrificial dying can be "the creaturely form...transparent to the love of God himself" because, as the definitive act of his finite freedom, it brings to fulfillment its own innermost orientation according to the "law" of infinite freedom, that is, of kenotic ("death"-like) self-abandonment in turning toward the Father (considering that finite freedom is created in the locus of the Son, as well as assumed, in the

⁴⁷⁸ See *GL* 7, 247; *GL* 1, 270ff., 479; and our discussion in chapter II, section D.3., of this study.

⁴⁷⁹ *WEL*, 239. Emphasis mine. If Balthasar traces the incarnate Son's sacrificial love back to its primal source in the Father, he does so as following upon the theological work of Matthias J. Scheeben. In *The Mysteries of Christianity*, Scheeben asserts that "the idea of Christ's sacrifice thrusts its roots deep into the abyss of the Trinity. As the Incarnation itself was to be the prolongation and extension of the eternal generation, and can be adequately comprehended only from this viewpoint, so the sacrificial surrender of the God-man was to be the most perfect expression of that divine love which, as God, He shows forth in the spiration and effusion of the Holy Spirit." Matthias J. Scheeben, *op. cit.*, 446.

⁴⁸⁰ Cited by Balthasar in *WEL*, 81.

hypostatic union, by him). If, in the eternal life of the trinitarian Godhead, this “death”-like disposition of kenotic self-giving-without-remainder is constitutive or “consummative” of each of the divine Persons, the Son’s assumption of human nature with its finite freedom and historicity can attain its consummation only in an act of *definitive* self-disposing as a function of his eternal filial mode of being-given-over from and self-giving-over to the Father.⁴⁸¹ Indeed, inasmuch as the divine Son (who is constituted as his reciprocal self-abandonment) is eternally generated by the Father, so we find in the dispensation of the divine economy that Jesus is given his “hour” of definitive self-giving-over from the Father’s initiative. As incarnate Son his posture of glorifying the Father is that of obedient self-expropriation (his being “delivered over” by the Father, Rom 8:3; 4:25; 1Jn 4:9-10; Jn 3:16) unto the final “moment” of his earthly history in which his human freedom acts in definitive and consummate kenotic response (in the form of a love-death) to the Father’s command (Phil 2:8-9; Heb 5:8-9; Jn 13:1; 10:17-18), with the Father’s initiatory will showing itself to be unto the bestowal of the divine fullness of life to his Beloved (the Father raises Jesus from the dead, Phil 2:9; Rom 4:25; Acts 3:15,26).

What this means for the human person, created and called in the Son, is that love-as-“death” is the dynamic form intrinsic to the creaturely mode of his or her own consummation, and that this consummation can in fact be realized only by a graced participation in the prototypical filial mode of divine kenotic love who is the Son. By virtue of its own nature, finite freedom could never attain to the realm of God’s infinite trinitarian self-disposing. Its “salvation”, therefore, requires a kenotic dynamic, not only because “death” belongs to the heart of existence in freedom (recall

⁴⁸¹ *GL* 1, 672: “[W]ith the Passion and Resurrection, Jesus’ divine form comes wholly to permeate the human form and to make it transparent in its functionality as love.” The human form of his death, moreover, “displays a unique combination: it is both accepted in free will *and* laid on him from without” [i.e., ultimately from the Father’s initiative]; *TD* 4, 500. Worth recalling here is Roch Kereszty’s statement which we cited in the excursus of chapter II: “[O]nly on the cross does he [Jesus] live out and express the full depth of the Son’s love for the Father, with the finality that only a freely accepted death can give to love in human life”; *op. cit.*, 318.

Ulrich and Ratzinger), but also because finite freedom as vocationally ordained by God cannot be “saved” (that is, “adopted” as his children) without God’s free and gracious initiative of self-giving-over that penetrates (traversing the infinite distance between Creator and creature) in order to elevate finite freedom to its perfection in an interpersonal union with its divine generative source. (We can affirm this divine activity premierly of the Father since “the innermost mystery of salvation is expressed in our being embraced within the eternal begetting of the Son from the bosom of the eternal Father”).⁴⁸² And since this union can only be consummated literally within the sphere of infinite tri-Personal self-disposing--that is, within the life of the Trinity itself--it requires of the human person an elevation to an *eschatological* condition of existence beyond this present world and human historicity. Such a suprahistorical eschatological consummation of finite freedom has been revealed to us in the resurrection-ascension of Jesus Christ. “No one has gone up to heaven [no finite, human freedom has received its consummation in sharing in the triune life of God] except the One who came down from there--the Son of Man [except in and through God’s gratuitous self-giving-over in the incarnation and death-resurrection of his Son]” (Jn 3:13; cf. also 2 Cor 4:14).

What is more, the definitive decision of finite freedom in relation to its end ultimately means for the human person the fundamental choice between his or her own “area” of contingent self-disposing and that of God’s absolute self-disposing: it means, therefore, the choice between the free disposing of self toward oneself (which is an inversion and perversion of the kenosis dynamic) or toward God (which is its real consummation).⁴⁸³ “‘Anyone who loves his life will lose it’: this is

⁴⁸² *WEL*, 80. This does not contradict another of Balthasar’s assertions: “The Son must elevate the creature into his own relationship with the Father, a relationship which is divine, and to that extent inaccessible to the creature”; *TD* 2, 186. There is no contradiction since, as we have seen, the Son’s activity is itself engendered by the Father.

⁴⁸³ *TD* 2, 228: “Going out of ourselves and into ‘the other’ is a sign both of poverty and of wealth, and this twofold character precipitates further choice: will finite freedom use the wealth of its being open to enrich itself further, or will it regard its being open as the opportunity to hand itself over to infinite free Being, to the Being who is the Giver of this free openness?” M. Blondel writes that the condition of each person’s finite freedom is essentially a “going

valid even for the very first choice of the spiritual creature. If he is to be free, he cannot be spared this ‘suffering’⁴⁸⁴...because if he is to be free, he is called in the “law” of trinitarian kenosis to the “suffering”, “darkness”, and “death” entailed in his total, personal excentration toward God.⁴⁸⁵ Thus the “suffering” and “darkness” that finite freedom experiences in its history is not due solely to the fact that by choosing finite goods the human person can still view them as lacking in some good and hence as “evil”.⁴⁸⁶ For there is also a kind of “suffering” and “darkness” involved in the human person’s *disponibilité* to the penetration of infinite freedom’s self-donation, and in his or her own self-giving-over into the transcendent realm of the Primal Lover. In the situation of the human person’s history in which the infinite Good that is the triune God is never directly encountered in his divine essence, finite freedom’s self-surrender in total availability as both receiving and giving “all” in relation to God knows a “darkness” that is inherent to the exercise of faith, hope, and charity (cf. 2 Cor 5:7; Rom 8:24; Mk 9:35-37). The kenotic self-abandonment into the intimate embrace of the heavenly Father means even for the greatest of saints an availability in “suffering” to the Infinitely Other, and a leap in “darkness” across the abyss.⁴⁸⁷ Consequently, even with respect to a condition of finite freedom that would be without sin, it would remain true that a kind of “darkness” in grace would be integral to the definitive modality of the human person’s self-

through to the point of final decision” for or against God’s absolute self-disposing. (*Lettre sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine en matière d’apologétique* in *Les Premiers Ecrits* [P.U.F., 1956], 44), as cited by Balthasar, *TD* 2, 190, n. 2. See also *TD* 2, 239.

⁴⁸⁴ *NE*, 260-61.

⁴⁸⁵ See St. Thomas, *S. Th.* I, q. 97, a. 2.

⁴⁸⁶ The human person is given both his freedom and the condition of his self-disposing within a situation of finite goods. Lacking direct encounter with the infinite Good in its very essence, finite freedom awakens to itself in a situation of relative “darkness.” In the “darkness” of the surrounding finitude, finite freedom is inherently oriented to reach toward a fuller and fuller possession of the light of God’s absolute Goodness. Balthasar summarizes the teaching of St. Thomas on this point as follows: “Every free will only seeks things under the aspect of good, and to that extent seeks throughout the whole breadth of being (‘which is the image--*similitudo*--of divine goodness’: *De Veritate*, 22.2, co., and ad 2) for the absolute Good, God; and in this process it is determined by itself alone, and thus is undetermined in its choice of the path along which the good is to be sought”; *TD* 2, 225.

⁴⁸⁷ One need only consider the testimonies of the “mystical” Doctors of the Church. Theresa of Avila, for example, describes an instance of her being enraptured by divine love as a “transpiercing of the soul”. Both her soul and body felt “torn apart” by the penetration of divine love, and she remained in this state of pain for several days. See

disposing, and so a kind of “suffering” and “death” that only mean consummation would be inevitable in finite freedom’s relation of covenantal-spousal kenosis vis-à-vis God.

Henri de Lubac, under whom Balthasar studied at Lyons, offers observations in his work *The Mystery of the Supernatural* that are pertinent here:

Perhaps it is the occasion for showing more clearly that not only does our perfection ‘come to us from one other than ourselves’, but that that perfection is not simply the straightforward and normal completion of tendencies which only needed supernatural help in order to reach their final goal: it is a “transforming union”, and therefore one cannot see how, under any circumstances, it could be attained without some kind of intrusion into nature to effect a “passive purification”. This would lead us to discern...that the passage to the supernatural order, even for an innocent and healthy nature, could never take place without some kind of death. For God’s infinite...[could not] be reached simply by an extension of the finite. It is not a matter of the finite being’s simply consenting to having a cubit added to his stature. He must consent to a more total sacrifice. Thus his natural tendency is to shrink into his own finitude, to “entrench himself”, as Claudel says, “behind his essential difference”. For is it not this difference that makes him what he is?...It was not only the awareness of sin, therefore, that made Augustine say (and we must say it with him) whenever he felt that approach: “I both shudder and glow with passion: I shudder inasmuch as I am unlike to it; I glow with passion inasmuch as I am like to it.”⁴⁸⁸ It is not only of dying to sin that we can say with him: “The strength of charity has not been able to be expressed more magnificently than when it was said, ‘Love is strong as death’. For who can resist death, brothers?...And because charity itself kills what we were that we may be what we were not, love makes in us a kind of death.”⁴⁸⁹ [Much the same is asserted by Maurice Blondel]: “No man can see God without dying. Nothing can touch God and not be raised up again; for no will is good unless it has come out of itself to leave room for a total invasion by God’s will.”⁴⁹⁰...The twofold, simultaneous experience which such writings reveal certainly carries us beyond all moral systems, all changing psychology, perhaps even beyond the wound of man’s first sin, to the depths of our original nature.⁴⁹¹

her *Spiritual Testimonies* in *The Collected Works of St. Theresa of Avila*, Vol. I, trans. by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1976) Testimony #12, p. 325.

⁴⁸⁸ *Confessions*, book 11, c. 9, n11.

⁴⁸⁹ Psalm 121, n.12 (PL,37, 1628).

⁴⁹⁰ Maurice Blondel, *L’Action*, (1893), p. 384.

⁴⁹¹ Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), pp. 37-39. See also G. Martelet, *Victoire sur la mort, éléments d’anthropologie chrétienne* (Editions de la Chronique sociale de France, 1962), 90-114.

For a discussion of de Lubac’s formative influence on Balthasar’s thought, refer to his personal testimony in *My Work: In Retrospect* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993); and John O’Donnell, *op. cit.*, 3.

While de Lubac's considerations toward a theology of death keep their focus upon the infinite distinction ("the essential difference") between divine nature and human nature, it is Balthasar's contribution to elucidate this distinction (which becomes in his work that between infinite freedom and finite freedom) as grounded upon the infinite hypostatic distinction between the Father and the Son in the immanent Trinity.

We can, then, with Balthasar distinguish between death "as we now experience it" in its sin-conditioned state⁴⁹²--as "a dying to God" this is "a form of death that was not originally designed for" the human person⁴⁹³--and "death" as finite freedom's definitive conformation to the eternal Son's archetypal kenosis, and hence as a dying "*for love of the Father*"⁴⁹⁴ expressive of finite freedom's perfection (comprehending both its "original" and redeemed states with respect to its fundamental character). It is, of course, pointless to speculate further about the "original", prelapsarian modality of finite freedom's consummation (granted its creation and call in the Son).⁴⁹⁵ The point here is rather to make clear that if the dying of Jesus Christ on the Cross is the supreme revelatory form of the Son's inner-trinitarian correspondence in love vis-à-vis the Father, and at the same time is the consummate form of human freedom, it must be that our sin-conditioned death which the Son assumes to himself is at root a deformation and perversion which is yet susceptible to a transformation and conversion by the power of his absolute filial love become incarnate. It is this insight that serves to explain the following statement by Balthasar:

⁴⁹² *TD* 4, 369.

⁴⁹³ *TD* 4, 189.

⁴⁹⁴ *TD* 4, 501.

⁴⁹⁵ According to Balthasar: "God's saving will is not subsequent to, and conditional upon, the occurrence of sin: it was in the beginning ('before Abraham was'...'all things were created'...'in him'--the light and life of men)"; *TD* 4, 187. "From God's point of view, 'original sin' does not cause any interruption in the offer of grace: it only transforms it. No longer is the form of grace based on the Son's mediatorship in creation but on the redemptive grace of the Cross and on the Son's bearing of the world's sin. It is only on mankind's side, at most, that we can speak of an 'interruption', since mankind cannot have originally been created in a state of estrangement from God (this is the heart of the doctrine of man's original state), even if grace was required from the very outset if the proper 'selfless' choice was to be made"; *TD* 4, 190.

If we, in our creaturely being, are destined beforehand to become sons in the eternal Son, this eternal Son himself...is always the one who has displayed God's expression or form and God's glory in his obedience (Rom 5:19), his becoming sin (2Cor 5:21), and his vicarious act for all (2Cor 5:14; Gal 3:13)....[T]he return to God as to our home, [means also] the return to our own selves (in the perfected human being Jesus Christ), since we are "designated beforehand" by God the Father "to be conformed to the image 'Son of God'" (Rom 8:29), not in a movement away from our destiny of mortality, but through being shaped into, and indeed growing together with the archetypal dying (Rom 6:5; Col 1:18: "the firstborn from the dead") and crucifixion (Rom 6:6; Gal 2:19), so that we may arrive at the archetypal act in which all humanity is glorified (Phil 3:11): we are designated beforehand to enter and return home to God as to our dwelling-place, and to our "creaturely" reality, in the Son of God.⁴⁹⁶

Even more to the point of our study is the extension of this insight back to its premier presupposition: namely, the Father's original kenosis as the "love-death"⁴⁹⁷ or "supra-death"⁴⁹⁸ that begets the Son's mirroring reciprocation both as divine and as human. For us who are "destined beforehand to become sons in the eternal Son" this means that our being delivered over to a definitive moment of self-abandonment has its ultimate and utterly positive source in God the Father. That this moment--our death--as we experience it within the order of sin and redemption, can become, with and in Christ, the expression of the purest filial love is a possibility that proceeds from the inmost recesses of God's paternal love.

D. The paternal leaving-free (or letting-be)

In giving over to the Son the entire divine substance, the Father in his generative act delivers over as proper to the Son a divine freedom equal to that of his own. That is to say, in generating the Son, the Father engenders consubstantial filial freedom [*sohnhafte Freiheit*] over against himself. To be sure, the divine Son exercises the one essential will of the Godhead, but he does so by way of the nonreversible order of his eternal procession, and hence in his distinct

⁴⁹⁶ *GL* 7, 396-97.

⁴⁹⁷ In *TD* 4, 501, Balthasar refers to the death of the incarnate Son as "the human expression of a shared love-death in a supereminently trinitarian sense": viz., between the Father and the Son.

hypostatic mode vis-à-vis the generating Father.⁴⁹⁹ Just as the divine essence is always already given to the Son in the form of the Father's kenotic self-surrender directed to a relationship of mutual exchange between himself and the Son united in the Spirit, so likewise the absolute freedom that the Son receives in being begotten by the Father is always already given as the power to reciprocate in total self-abandonment. In Balthasar's words: "What the Father gives is the capacity to be a self [to be an 'I' that is not the Father], and so also autonomy, but an autonomy which can be understood only as a surrender of self to the Other."⁵⁰⁰

Correlative to absolute freedom are the aspects of distance and otherness as established by the Father's generative act. For in giving the Son autonomy [*Selbstständigkeit*] the Father gives the Son the distance [*Abständigkeit*] that is necessary in order to maintain the personal distinction of the Other in the exchange or commerce, if you will, of self-giving love between them.⁵⁰¹ The point is made elsewhere in the following way:

If there is to be absolute freedom, it follows that, in what takes place between the divine "hypostases", there must be *areas of infinite freedom* [*unendliche Freiheitsräume*] that...do not allow everything to be compressed into an airless unity and identity. The Father's act of surrender calls for its own area of freedom [*Der Akt des väterlichen Sichgebens fordert seinen eigenen Freiheitsraum*]; the Son's act, whereby he receives himself from and acknowledges his indebtedness to the Father, requires its own area; and the act whereby the Spirit proceeds, illuminating the most intimate love of Father and Son, testifying to it and fanning it into flame, demands its area of freedom. However intimate the relationship, it implies that the distinction between the persons is maintained. Something like infinite "duration" [*Dauer*] and infinite "space" [*Raum*] must be attributed to the acts of reciprocal love so that the life of the *communio*, of fellowship, can develop....True, all temporal notions of "before" and "after" must be kept at a distance; but absolute freedom must provide

⁴⁹⁸ TD IV, 74.

⁴⁹⁹ See TD IV, 77 and 445. In identifying the person of the Son with the hypostatic mode of (infinite) filial freedom we are supposing what has been established thus far: (i) in the economic order, the identity of Jesus' Person and mission, of his "I" and his self-disposing as the One sent from the Father; (ii) with respect to the immanent Trinity, the Father's self-surrender whereby he eternally begets the Son as his consubstantial Image coincides with the Son's reciprocal self-giving, such that the filial correspondence is constitutive of the Person of the Son.

⁵⁰⁰ UYB, 44.

⁵⁰¹ See TD IV, 82.

the acting area [*Spiel Raum*] in which it is to develop--and develop in terms of love and blessedness.⁵⁰²

What concerns us at the moment is to make clear the relation of the Father's act of self-giving to the Son's act of reciprocating inasmuch as the latter requires its own acting area of infinite freedom. "The realms of freedom in God", writes Balthasar, "come about both through the self-giving of the hypostases and by each hypostasis in turn letting the other two 'be'."⁵⁰³ Since it belongs to the self-giving of the Father to beget the distinct act of filial self-disposing that constitutes the Son, we can say that the "realm of infinite freedom" proper to the Son comes about by the paternal hypostasis letting the Son "be". "Begetting is in God the definitive, irrevocable leaving-free [*Freilassung*] the Begotten";⁵⁰⁴ it is an "allowing space" [*Raumlassen*] for the Son,⁵⁰⁵ and a "letting-be" [*Sein-Lassen*] the Beloved in the area of his own absolute freedom.⁵⁰⁶ The paternal hypostasis "is indeed Father only insofar as he is the unpreconceivable One-who-begets and leaves-free [*Zeugende und Freilassende*]"⁵⁰⁷

Accordingly, whatever is to be said about the paternal modality of leaving-free (or letting-be) must be guided by its identity with the Father's act of generating. Balthasar's consistency in applying this principle will be evident in what follows.

⁵⁰² *TD* 2, 257. In *TD* IV, 82, in the section entitled "Positivität von Zeit und Raum", he writes: "Natürlich ist in Gott 'keine räumliche Trennung möglich und nötig. Aber der hierarchische Abstand der Hervorgänge ersetzt sie.'" Inner citation is from A. von Speyr, *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 58.

⁵⁰³ *TD* 2, 262. The German original reads: "Die Freiheitsräume in Gott entstehen sowohl durch das Sichverschenken der Hypostasen wie durch das Sein-lassen je der zwei andern Hypostasen durch die ein."

⁵⁰⁴ *TD* IV, 73. My translation. In addition, *ibid.*, 86: "Der Vater legt den Sohn in der Zeugung nicht fest, 'er lässt ihn...frei in den unendlichen Raum seiner eigenen sohnhaften Freiheit'." Inner citation is from A. von Speyr, *Ka* I, 138.

⁵⁰⁵ See *TD* IV, 82.

⁵⁰⁶ *TD* 2, 259: "[E]ach [divine hypostasis] subsists by being *let* be"; the German original (*TD* II/1, p.235): "...ihre Subsistenz immer auch auf einem Sein-lassen beruht". Emphasis Balthasar's. See also *TD* IV, 75.

⁵⁰⁷ *TD* IV, 82. My translation.

D.1. *Its twofold dynamic: withdrawing from and remaining in the Beloved*

For Balthasar, God's paternal leaving-free is both the Father's withdrawing from and his remaining in the Son. These two aspects are indissoluble; their interpenetration is such that each aspect can be fully elucidated only with reference to the other. The paternal modality of leaving-free is a kind of *withdrawal* inasmuch as the generating Father, in allowing the Son an area for his unique personal mode of divine autonomy, "detaches himself [*Sich-lösen*] from the beneficiary".⁵⁰⁸ Starting with the Father, the power to allow the Other to be [*Sein-lassen Können*] is expressed precisely as the power to separate oneself from one's own [*Sich-vom-Eigenen-abscheiden-Können*],⁵⁰⁹ and the Son is indeed "the Father's own" as the one who is given himself by the Father's giving of all that is his (Jn 17:10). We are reminded of the insight that the Father's being-for-another entails a self-renunciation; in the context of our present theme, we note that the Father's positing of a distance [*Abständigkeit*] in acting for the Son's autonomy [*Selbstständigkeit*] entails a self-distancing from the Son. In order to illustrate this point, Balthasar compares by way of metaphor the generative disposition of the Father (characterized as "a certain letting-happen" [*ein gewisses Geschehenlassen*]), with the image of a husband's disposition in the conjugal act: "im Sein- und 'Ziehen'-lassen des Sohnes durch den Vater liegt auch für diesen ein freigebendes Lassen (so wie der zeugende Mann im Akt seinen Samen ziehen lässt und sich dabei selber zurückzieht)."⁵¹⁰ Self-withdrawing is as integral to God's generative love as is self-giving. Indeed we do better to view the former as a modality of the latter. That is, we must see this paternal withdrawal, not as a negative turning away, but as a positive form of a love that affirms and fosters, summons and evokes, the response-ability of the Beloved in his otherness. "This is not retreat or

⁵⁰⁸ TD IV, 82. My translation.

⁵⁰⁹ See TD IV, 75.

⁵¹⁰ TD IV, 75.

resignation: it is the positive form of infinite love.”⁵¹¹ (We will discuss the generative power of this modality in our next section.)

It is possible, moreover, to perceive this paternal withdrawal as an aspect of the Father’s humility. For “the hypostases do not possess the divine nature in common like an untouchable treasure; rather, the divine nature is defined through and through by the modes of divine being”.⁵¹² Now since the Father gives over the divine nature to the Son for the latter’s self-disposing whereby the divine nature is codetermined, and since the infinite glory that belongs to the divinity is identical with this nature, it follows that the Father’s generative leaving-free the Son allows for a mode of glory distinctive to the Son’s mode of being God. Thus we suggest that the Father’s withdrawal from the Son is one with his glorification of the Son: the Father withdraws so that the Son as such is glorified. And so it is the Father who, as the Primal Lover, is the archetype and source of that humility which characterizes genuine love, of that self-effacement which is the spontaneous disposition of the lover who glories in the face of the beloved.

At the same time, the paternal leaving-free the Son is a *remaining in* the Son insofar as the One Begotten, while receiving himself in such a way that he subsists in himself, is yet the hypostatic locus in whom the Father ceaselessly expresses his divine Paternity. This means in effect that the Son’s “receiving himself (in which he receives his essence, the entire absoluteness of the Godhead)”--and hence infinite freedom--“can never be cut off from the paternal act of generative love”.⁵¹³ The Father is indeed ever present in the Son, eternally begetting in him the freedom of full and authentic self-giving. Hence Balthasar understands Jesus’ affirmation that “the Father is greater” as expressive of the experience of the eternal Child who “knows himself to be

⁵¹¹ *TD* 2, 262.

⁵¹² *TD* 2, 258.

⁵¹³ My translation of *TD* IV,81: “Sein Selbstempfang (in dem er sein Wesen, die ganze Absolutheit der Gottheit empfängt) ist...aber nie abgelöst von dem in Liebe zeugenden väterlichen Akt.”

sheer Gift that is given to itself, and which would not exist without the Giver, who although distinct from the Gift, nonetheless gives himself within it”.⁵¹⁴ The Gift referred to here is the begotten Son constituted as his equally absolute self-surrender. This too suggests an original paternal humility: God the Father is the “greater” One who not only “makes space” for filial freedom over against himself, but also remains hidden in this “space” as the engendering source of the Son’s ability to give himself in love.

We are now in a position to understand how it is that the Father’s forsaking of the incarnate Son on the Cross is the form that his generative love takes vis-à-vis the One who, for our sake, is “made to be sin” (2Cor 5:21). Here we are relying principally on Balthasar’s soteriology as presented in his *Theo Drama (vol. 4): The Action*. “If Jesus”, writes Balthasar, “can be forsaken by the Father, the condition for this ‘forsaking’ [*Verlassung*] must lie within the Trinity, in the absolute distance/distinction between the hypostasis who surrenders the Godhead and the hypostasis who receives it.”⁵¹⁵ For the moment let us focus on the “absolute distance/distinction” between the Father and the Son before moving on to consider the paternal “forsaking” in connection with the Father’s surrendering of the Godhead.

We have already remarked on the correlation between infinite autonomy, infinite distinction, and infinite distance as established by the Father’s eternal begetting of the Son. This threefold correlation is implied when Balthasar refers to any one of these terms as illuminating the inner-divine condition for the economy of salvation. Balthasar can, for instance, approach the

⁵¹⁴ *UYB*, 44.

⁵¹⁵ *TD* 4, 333. This statement presupposes “the mystery of God’s redemptive kenosis...[whereby] he reveals and communicates his own nature to the world”. Elsewhere Balthasar makes a similar point, albeit with Christ as the focus: “It is only from the Cross and in the context of the Son’s forsakenness [*Verlassenheit*] that the latter’s distance from the Father is fully revealed”; *TD* 4, 320. In addition (*Rdr*, 135): In the paschal event “he is forsaken by God on the Cross. Yet this ‘infinite distance’, which recapitulates the sinner’s mode of alienation from God, will remain forever the highest revelation known to the world of the *diastasis* (within the eternal being of God) between Father and Son in the Holy Spirit.”

mystery of the divine economy by employing “distinction” as the central notion: “Since the world cannot have any other locus but within the distinction between the hypostases (there is nothing outside God), the problems associated with it--its sinful alienation from God--can only be solved at this locus. The creature’s No resounds at the ‘place’ of distinction within the Godhead.”⁵¹⁶ Alternately, Balthasar can utilize the notion of “distance” in maintaining that “the divine act that brings forth the Son...involves the positing of an absolute, infinite ‘distance’ that can contain and embrace all other distances that are possible within the world of finitude, including the distance of sin.”⁵¹⁷ In either case, Balthasar’s primary concern is to affirm a mutual relationship of infinite freedom in God--a reciprocal self-disposing between the Father and the Son--that alone can ground the covenantal relationship in which finite freedom is established as God’s vis-à-vis. It is by virtue of the Father’s leaving-free the Son within the trinitarian Godhead that the creature can, in an analogous manner, be left free over against God within the covenant. Inasmuch as this paternal leaving-free is a modality of absolute love at its generative source, it “grounds and surpasses all we mean by separation, pain, and alienation in the world and all we can envisage in terms of loving self-giving, interpersonal relationship and blessedness”.⁵¹⁸ We must not, however, consider there to be a direct identity of these two, à la Hegel and Moltmann, who conceive of the negative and the positive conditions as inherently inseparable in the process of God’s self-realization. Rather, the Father’s inner-divine act of generating, whereby he constitutes himself as paternal love, is eternally simultaneous with the consubstantial Son’s (begotten) self-disposing as an absolute consent to his

⁵¹⁶ *TD* 4, 333.

⁵¹⁷ *TD* 4, 323.

⁵¹⁸ *TD* 4, 325. While Balthasar makes this predication explicitly with reference to the Son as “the infinitely Other of the Father”, we are justified in predicating it of the Father (*mutatis mutandis*) on the basis of Balthasar’s explication of God’s generative act. Indeed, within the same paragraph, Balthasar traces “every other separation” back to the “incomprehensible and unique ‘separation’ of God from himself” in the Father’s act of generation: see n. 531 below.

being generated.⁵¹⁹ But should the Father will to extend his relation of natural Fatherhood to creatures (2 Pt 1:4), which means concomitantly his leaving them free vis-à-vis his paternal love, the possibility arises that the creature may refuse the gift, with the result that, on the creature's side, the otherness proper to filial self-disposing may become perversion, and the distance necessary for interpersonal exchange may become alienation. (About this, too, we will have more to say at the conclusion of this section.)

We have now to consider the connection between the Father's surrendering of the Godhead and his "forsaking" of Jesus on the Cross, seeing in the former the condition for the latter. Previously we noted that "God the Father can give his divinity away in such a manner that...the Son's possession of it is 'equally substantial'", which implies "a unique and incomprehensible 'separation' of God from himself"--(here we add): one which "*includes* and grounds every other separation--were it even the darkest and most bitter".⁵²⁰ Moreover, we have argued that since the Son's possession of the divinity means his possession of absolute freedom, clearly the Father's generative surrender means his leaving-free or letting-be the Son to an absolutely distinct self-disposal. In addition, we have analyzed the paternal modality of leaving-free, and perceived therein its twofold dynamic: it is both a withdrawing from and a remaining in the Son. We can expect, therefore, the Father's economic expression of his immanent generation of the Son to entail precisely this synthesis of withdrawal and accompaniment, howevermuch transposed in terms of his relation not only to the incarnate Son's finite freedom but also to the Son's "exchange of place" with sinners. Indeed, according to Balthasar, maintaining this synthesis is imperative to a theology of the Cross (soteriology) that does justice to the testimony of Sacred Scripture. For we find in

⁵¹⁹ *TD IV*, 73: "Zeugung in Gott ist endgültige, unwiderrufliche Freilassung des Erzeugten, der der ganzen göttlichen Freiheit für immer teilhaftig wird; und da Zeugung zeitlos ist, ist die dankende Rückwendung des Sohnes zum Vater seinem Ausgang je schon gleichewig."

⁵²⁰ I have slightly modified G. Harrison's translation in *TD 4*, 325. Emphasis Balthasar's.

Scripture the juxtaposition of the Son's being abandoned by the Father, his being delivered over to the condition of sinners as their "representative" and experiencing the Father's "hiddenness" thus,⁵²¹ and the Son's uninterrupted accompaniment by the Father, the One in whom the Father is at work accomplishing his eschatological purpose.⁵²² In order to resolve this juxtaposition it is not enough to appeal to the hypostatic union (the twofoldness of natures in Christ, human and divine),⁵²³ nor to "the view that Christ is somehow 'above' his abandonment by God and continues to enjoy the beatific vision" (the twofoldness of parts in the human soul of Christ, inferior and superior).⁵²⁴ Rather, this paradox has its ultimate presupposition in the Father's generative act, in the twofoldness integral to his leaving-free the Son.

We can summarize it thus: in the eternal and immanent act of the Father's begetting the Son there is at play the twofold dynamic of withdrawing from and remaining in which is proper to that love which generates an Other for a mutual relationship of infinite freedom. Inasmuch as this

⁵²¹ See Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46; Is 53:4-10; Is 49:4; Acts 3:18; Rom 3:25; 4:25; 5:8; 8:32; Cor 5:21; and so forth.

⁵²² See Jn 1:18; 5:19-20; 8:28-29; 10:17-18; 14:10-11; 15:10; 16:32; Is 52:13-15; 53:11-12; Is 49:4; Acts 2:24-32; Rom 8:39; 2Cor 5:19; and so forth.

⁵²³ See, for example, C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge, 1966), 458-59, who proposes that as man the Son is abandoned by the Father but as God the Son remains in communion with the Father. For an overview of the various theological interpretations of the abandonment of Jesus Christ by the Father, see Gérard Rossé, *The Cry of Jesus on the Cross: A Biblical and Theological Study* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

⁵²⁴ *TD* 4, 333. Thomas Aquinas restricts the meaning of the Father's abandoning of Christ to the Father's exposing him to the power of his enemies; the Father does not shield Christ from the suffering inflicted by his persecutors. With respect to Christ's suffering, Thomas holds that it touched only the inferior part of Christ's human soul, that part which is connected with the senses of the body. The superior part of Christ's soul, insofar as it enjoys the beatific vision, cannot suffer. Hence Christ was able to suffer those terrors at the hands of men from which the Father did not spare him while nevertheless remaining in beatific communion with the Father. See Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.* III, q. 49, a. 3, and q. 50, a. 2.

For Balthasar, however, an interpretation of Jesus' passion which restricts it "solely to the corporal and sensible level" is insufficient, since it would reduce the passion "to nothing more than a physical trial, with the Son submitting to torture like a Stoic or fakir" (*TD* IV, 237-38; my translation; cf. von Speyr's *Johannes*, 141, which Balthasar cites with approval). Balthasar is equally firm in rejecting the opposite extreme: an interpretation of the Son's inner appropriation of sin which views it "as an identification of the Crucified with the actual No of sin itself". In this respect, Balthasar voices his disagreement with Luther "who says that this No at least begins to surface in Jesus, but he 'swallows it down'." On the contrary, asserts Balthasar (*TD* 4, 336): "Jesus does experience the darkness of the sinful state, not in the same way as the (God-hating) sinner experiences it...but nonetheless in a deeper and darker experience. This is because it takes place in the profound depths of the relations between the divine hypostases--which are inaccessible to any creature." Further on, Balthasar suggests that we follow S. Bulgakov, "who establishes an

twofold dynamic is constitutive of the Father's inner-divine activity, it is the ontic and explanatory ground of the twofold dynamic manifested in the Father's sending his Son as man for the consummation of the covenant--namely, the Father's forsaking and accompanying the incarnate Son in the paschal event. Since in God's inner-trinitarian life this twofold dynamic is generative of the Person of the Son who is his distinct hypostatic mode of infinite freedom, and since in the Incarnation of the Son the eternal generation is translated in terms of the economic mission, the human freedom which the Son assumes and exercises (as expressive but not constitutive of his divine Person) reaches perfection only as originating from and in relation to the Father's (twofold) leaving-free. That is, the Son's self-disposing in finite freedom is such that both distance from and generative indwelling by the Father coincide (indicating the dramatic economic enactment of the trinitarian difference-in-union, a union not only by virtue of identity in substance but also of the *circumincessio* of the hypostatic modes of self-giving). What this means for the Son's finite freedom insofar as it assumes, in accordance with the Father's will, mankind's condition of sinful alienation before the Father is that precisely as the human freedom *of the Son* it is simultaneously forsaken by (as otherness/distance "made to be sin") and in union with (as perfect obedience engendered by) the Father. And indeed, it is *because* these modalities of finite (filial) freedom coincide in the Son as a function of his eternal procession that they *can* be revelatory of the inmost essence of God and redemptive of mankind called to be children of the Father. In the words of Balthasar: "[It is] that God...is love, and...that he is this intrinsically, in the mystery of his Trinity, which alone can explain the total opposition--between being with God and being abandoned by God--within God himself."⁵²⁵

analogy between what the sinner would have to expect from God's wrath and the Son's forsakenness by God"; *TD* 4, 338.

⁵²⁵ *Rdr*, 171-72.

Similarly, Balthasar builds an argument “from below”, starting from “the point where the subject undergoing the ‘hour’ is the Son speaking with the Father[:] ...if it is possible for one Person in God to accept suffering to the extent of God-forsakenness, and to deem it his own, then evidently it is not something foreign to God, something that does not affect him. It must be something profoundly appropriate to his divine Person, for--to say it once again--his being sent (*missio*) by the Father is a modality of his proceeding (*processio*) from the Father.”⁵²⁶ By shifting the point of reference from the Son to the Father (which is the hermeneutic of our study), it becomes possible to perceive that the Father’s forsaking [*Verlassung*] the Son in the economy must be a modality of his begetting the Son--more specifically, of his leaving-free [*Freilassung*] the Son as his infinitely Other, albeit as One who enters the sin-conditioned creaturely order.

Against this trinitarian background we are also enabled to interpret the “hour” of the Father’s forsaking the Son as coinciding with the “hour” of the Son’s glorification. We have already considered how, in the inner-divine life of the Trinity, the Father’s self-withdrawal from the Son is intrinsic to his affirmation and glorification of the Son’s distinct exercise of divine autonomy. This permits us to understand that at the Cross, when the Father withdraws from the Son who has undertaken the *admirabile commercium*, this paternal withdrawal is not only revelatory of God’s disposition as abandoning/leaving-be mankind to their sins (e.g., Rom 1:24,26,28), but also points to its utterly positive ground in the Father’s leaving-be the Son to his absolute self-disposing in terms of both his divine and human freedom. (Just as the incarnate Son’s dying discloses mankind’s sin-conditioned death, and yet is also the revelatory form of the “supra-death” that is inscribed in the eternal life of the Trinity: the reciprocal self-surrender between Father, Son, and Spirit.)⁵²⁷ Since, moreover, it is precisely at the “moment” of the incarnate Son’s

⁵²⁶ TD 3, 226.

⁵²⁷ See *Credo*, 12, 53-54, 59.

definitive and unlimited self-giving that the Father withdraws--leaving the Son be in his solidarity with sinners--this paternal withdrawing characterizes the Father's glorifying the Son, whose glory is precisely his sacrificial love "to the end" (Jn 13:1,32). Indeed we may see the Father's withdrawal from the Son at the Cross as a paternal self-concealment in humility which serves to bring to the foreground (that is, to glorify) the perfection of divine *filial* love offered "for us" through his humanity.⁵²⁸ Nonetheless, because the Son acts only by virtue of the Father's self-surrender in him, the nakedness and exposure of his filial return of love on the Cross becomes fully transparent to its generative Origin, and thus, in its turn, is expressive of a (corresponding) *filial* glorification of God the Father.⁵²⁹ "Father,...glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee" (Jn 17:1; cf. 5:19f.; 15:9).

In view of the twofold dynamic inherent in the paternal leaving-free as a modality of divine generative love, it would be a mistake to regard the Father's "forsaking" the Son one-sidedly as indicative of a rupturing of the Father-Son relationship. We are confronted, rather, with the ever-greater mystery of the trinitarian Father whose economic translation of his divine Paternity in the mission of his Son reconciles the world to himself (2Cor 5:19). Hence Balthasar's insistence that the paschal event

takes place at a point where the estranged world, having been drawn in all seriousness into the relationships within the Godhead, seems to create a contradiction in God. "Here the trinitarian relationships in God attain their greatest clarity: God is confronted with God; God is opposed by God. So the Father allows the Son to endure dereliction among sinners [for he leaves-free the Son to the

⁵²⁸ *GL* 7, 250: "This becomes clear where the glorification of the Son by the Father is understood as the proof brought by the Father that every glorious fruit that has resulted from the mission of the Son has its final foundation in the perfect, absolute obedience, and gives glory to this obedience too as the perfected revelation of the eternal love of the Son. The ray of supramundane love (Jn 17:5) does not fall upon the obedience of the Cross to transfigure it: it breaks forth from within this obedience too."

⁵²⁹ *GL* 7, 384: "[I]n the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, as this is disclosed by the obedience and the Cross, lies something ultimate that is uttered by God,...this self portrayal by God[,...]the ultimate gesture of the self-giving of the trinitarian love....Henceforward, nothing more of God will become visible: this will be his total disclosure, but also his total concealment." We can put it this way: the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son becomes, in the event of the Cross, the mutual self-concealment on behalf of (as the glorification of) the Other's total self-disclosure. See in addition *GL* 7, 283 and 285; also *TD* 4, 362.

distinct expression of filial love ‘for us’]....But all the while he is wholly God, not only moved by the Father’s love but also borne and enveloped by it” [for the freedom of filial love is eternally begotten by the Father]. In this wrathful alienation --from their “economic” point of view, that is, in their common work of love for the world--Father and Son are closer together than ever.⁵³⁰

Even those remarks which deny a rupture between Father and Son but which remain Christocentric in expression call for an interpretation that roots the Christ event in the Father’s work. For example, Balthasar’s statement--“the Cross is the pure obedience that remains intact even when God withdraws himself”⁵³¹--is further illuminated when we note that the Son’s obedience “remains intact” because the Father remains in the Son, engendering filial freedom as obediential love, even as this generative act entails withdrawing in the sense of allowing otherness in freedom. We leave a more extensive discussion of this climactic point in theodramatic action, along with its basis in the primal inner-divine drama of the Trinity, to our subsequent sections.

We now turn our attention to God’s creation of finite freedom, which provides the inner-worldly presupposition for the covenant of grace, that is, for the theo-drama of biblical history.⁵³² Our purpose in the present context is to understand this divine creative activity insofar as it is an *ad extra* function of the Father’s generative leaving-free.⁵³³ Such an understanding implies a theological consideration of the notions of divine transcendence and immanence with respect to the

⁵³⁰ *TD* 4, 348. Inner citation is from P. Althaus, *Die christliche Wahrheit*, 3rd ed. (Bertelsmann, Gütersloh), 471-72. See also *TD* 4, 336, 493, 495-96; and *Rdr*, 171.

In the first part of his trilogy, *A Theological Aesthetics*, Balthasar rejects the notion that the Crucified Son is simply cut off from the Father. Here, too, Balthasar insists on maintaining the synthesis between being-forsaken by and being-with/accompanied by the Father (viewed from the side of the Son). *GL* 7, 383: “[T]he one who is raised up on the Cross will ‘draw all people to himself’ (Jn 12:32), because it will be seen, from that exalted place, that ‘I am He’ (8:28). This insight is the same as the insight ‘that the Father is in me and I am in the Father’ (10:38). In the Fourth Gospel, with this monological character, there is therefore no abandonment of the Son by God in the sense of Mark and Matthew; even if all scatter, each to his own place, and leave him alone, ‘I am not alone, for the Father is with me’ (16:32). The Son can be a word that is given away,...that is poured out utterly: but he still remains an eternal word.”

⁵³¹ *TD* 4, 495-96.

⁵³² “The creation of finite freedom by infinite freedom is the starting point of all theo-drama”; *TD* 2, 271.

⁵³³ This, of course, is not to deny the traditional doctrine that creation is the common work of the three divine Persons. “For as the Trinity has only one and the same nature, so too does it have only one and the same

free creature that advances beyond a predominantly essentialist approach of (philosophical) “theo-ontology” to include an explicitly trinitarian hermeneutic.⁵³⁴ From this viewpoint the notion of God’s immanence in the free creature has as its primal condition of possibility the *circumincessio* of the generating Father in the responsively imaging Son, while the notion of God’s transcendence has its primal roots in the absolute otherness and unoriginated, determinative nature of the Father’s hypostatic act of generating. And so we find ourselves following Balthasar’s spiral-like approach to theological explication as we return to the theme of the Father and finite freedom introduced in III.B.; we will develop and deepen it here.

Previously we argued that a real reciprocity of freedoms between God and the human person must have as the condition for its possibility a real reciprocity between absolute paternal freedom and absolute filial freedom, a reciprocity initiated and engendered by the trinitarian Father.⁵³⁵ In addition we have seen that “begetting is in God the definitive, irrevocable leaving-free of the Begotten”.⁵³⁶ Human freedom, accordingly, is rendered possible by the Father’s leaving-free or

operation....However each divine Person performs the common work according to his unique personal property.” CCC, #258.

⁵³⁴ Balthasar makes clear, however, that the inclusion of a trinitarian hermeneutic with its “personological” categories ought not to result in the exclusion of the “theo-ontological” categories of philosophy. The divine Persons are, after all, *subsistent relations constitutive of the divine Being* as trinitarian love. In short, “the dimension of the personal is itself ontic”; TD 2, 314; see also 267-68. Moreover, we ought not to consider the attempt to develop a trinitarian hermeneutic in regard to a doctrine of creation as wholly absent from the thought of High Scholasticism. In TD 5 (the section entitled “The world is from the Trinity”), Balthasar points out that the great Scholastics affirmed the Trinity to be the inalienable precondition of creation. A sampling from the teaching of St. Thomas is provided. *S. Th.* I, q. 45, a. 6: “[T]he divine Persons, according to the nature of their procession, have a causality in relation to the creation of things....Now the craftsman works through the word conceived in his intellect, and through the love of his will towards some object. So, too, God the Father made the creature through his Word, which is His Son; and through his Love, which is the Holy Spirit. And so the processions of the Persons are the model of the productions of creatures according as they include the essential attributes, namely, knowledge and will.” Hence the power of the Creator belongs primordially to the Father by a certain order, “*ordine quodam*” (*ibid.*, ad. 2). In *I Sent.*, St. Thomas states: “[T]he procession of Persons in unity of essence is the cause of the procession of creatures in diversity of essence”; d.2, div. text. Similarly, “ex processione personarum divinarum distinctarum causatur omnis creaturarum processio et multiplicatio”; *ibid.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 2. These citations and others are given in TD IV, 53-57.

⁵³⁵ In short: “the Father is both Begetter and Creator” of filial freedom--both infinite and finite; TD 2, 262.

⁵³⁶ TD IV, 73. My translation.

letting-be the hypostatic act that is the Son.⁵³⁷ “If God’s nature, theologically speaking, shows itself to be ‘absolute love’ (*autocharis*)⁵³⁸ by giving itself away and allowing others to be,...the same must apply to his ‘making room’ for his free creatures.”⁵³⁹ Balthasar will have us take a further step: if the Father’s generative letting-be or “allowing space” for the Son shows itself in an indissolubly twofold aspect--as both a paternal withdrawing from and a remaining in the Begotten--the same must apply to the Father’s creative “making room” for his free creatures (in this case the twofoldness is sometimes expressed as a latency and an accompaniment). “They only gain room for freedom if God, in allowing them freedom, withdraws to a certain extent and becomes latent. He who cannot be absent from any place thus adopts a kind of incognito, keeping many paths open for freedom, not only in appearance but in reality, for he is always at work and continually liberates the creature for freedom: ‘*voluntatem movet, non ut ex necessitate, sed ut indeterminate se habentem ad multa*’.”⁵⁴⁰ We have, then, to consider how God as Father is latent in finite freedom and how he accompanies it, and we must do so by emphasizing the interpenetration of these two aspects.

⁵³⁷ TD 2, 266: “[T]he ‘nothing-out-of-which’ the world came into being can only be sought in infinite freedom itself: that is, in the realms of creatable being opened up by divine omnipotence and, at a deeper level, by the trinitarian ‘letting-be’ [*Seinlassen*] of the hypostatic acts.”

⁵³⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatit.* or I (PG 44, 1197A).

⁵³⁹ TD 2, 272-73.

⁵⁴⁰ TD 2, 273. Inner citation is from Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, q 6, a un c. Earlier in the same work (*ibid.*, 271-72) Balthasar writes that “the creature is given a nature that is not as such divine--*Deus ‘non intrat essentiam rerum creaturarum’* (Thomas, *De pot.* q 3, a 5, ad 1)--and hence too its own area of operation, which becomes all the more ‘autonomous’ the nearer a being is to God.” Once again he refers to Thomas: “The nearer (*vicinior*) a free nature stands to God, the more it is able to move itself” (*De ver.* q 22, a 4 c). Transposed in terms of the twofold aspect of transcendence and immanence (or again, distance and nearness; withdrawal and accompaniment) this means that the *nearer* the free creature stands to God (indicating the greater immanence of divine causality in the sense of the greater gift of autonomy made to the creature), the more *distant* is the free creature with respect to its distinct self-moving as other than God (for consider that “our choice is not determined to one course of action by divine providence, as are the actions of those beings which do not possess freedom” [Thomas, *De ver.* q 5, a 5, ad 1]; indeed, since the free creature is not its own end, but rather is determined as to its end by a Source other than itself, there is a “distance” that permits of failure between its space of self-disposing and its end/norm such that this distance can become estrangement from God, self, and other creatures).

“God’s ‘latency’ [*Latenz*] is his loving respect for his creature’s freedom.”⁵⁴¹ Balthasar points to the parable of the talents as providing an indication of how God is latent: “he gives them an acting area in which they can creatively exercise their freedom and imagination; but what he gives them is *his* wealth, which they can use wisely or fritter away. First of all they are endowed with the talents; they possess something with which they can act and play--their finite freedom. But between the giving of this gift and the use and exercise of it lies a certain interval that belongs to the human *autexousion*.”⁵⁴² We are presented once again with the simultaneity of the Father’s giving of, and self-detaching from, what is his own.⁵⁴³ For to say that the Father gives of *his* wealth is to affirm that “infinite [paternal] freedom must be sufficiently free (according to its nature)...actually to impart finite freedom in the first place”.⁵⁴⁴ This divine impartation is not restricted to the first moment of the creature’s existence, since God’s giving of freedom to his creature takes the form of establishing a “joint action” (to use traditional terminology) of infinite and finite freedom.⁵⁴⁵ On the side of infinite freedom, this joint action is sustained and accompanied by God. Indeed, God’s accompaniment is such that it enables every free act of the creature: “for he is always at work and continually liberates the creature for freedom.”⁵⁴⁶ On the side of finite freedom, what is being enabled is a self-disposing that, in virtue of its creatureliness, is infinitely distinct from God. And precisely as a self-disposing which is finite and contingent, it

⁵⁴¹ *TD* 2, 276.

⁵⁴² *TD* 2, 273. With this reference to an “acting area” and an “interval” we are reminded of Balthasar’s description of God’s inner-trinitarian life which serves as a template for the creation of finite freedom (*TD* 2, 257): “Something like infinite ‘duration’ and infinite ‘space’ must be attributed to the [hypostatic] acts of reciprocal love....[A]bsolute freedom must provide the acting area in which it is to develop...in terms of love and blessedness.”

⁵⁴³ See *TD* IV, 75 and 82, where this simultaneity is viewed as characterizing the Father’s eternal generation of the Son.

⁵⁴⁴ *TD* 2, 200.

⁵⁴⁵ According to Thomas Aquinas, *De ver.* q 5, a 5, ad 4: “‘God leaves man in the hand of his own counsel’ in the sense that he gives him providence over his own acts. Man’s providence over his acts, however, does not exclude God’s providence over them, just as the active power of creatures does not exclude the active power of God.” See in addition *S. Th.*, I/II, q 109, a 1.

⁵⁴⁶ *TD* 2, 273. Elsewhere Balthasar maintains that “the giving of freedom remains a constant and continuing act (creation proceeds by preservation, *conservatio in esse*)”; *ibid.*, 313.

bespeaks, not only its (ontically primary) character of being-given-itself [*Sich-Gegebensein*],⁵⁴⁷ but also its transcendent Source whose free giving and giving of freedom is characterized by a certain self-withdrawing so that what is not-God can be affirmed and realized in its genuine otherness.⁵⁴⁸

It is only a small step from here to understanding the twofold character of infinite freedom's "allowing space" for finite freedom as a reflection, in the order of creation, of the primordial humility distinctive to the Fatherhood of God. This step is assisted by a particularly striking passage in which Balthasar proffers an explicitly trinitarian interpretation of the divine latency inherent in the Creator-creature relation. The event of the Cross, says Balthasar, "takes place in a silence in which even the Father withdraws into invisibility. In a similar way, in creation, the Creator withdraws in silence from the creatures he has endowed with fruitfulness, in order to speak to them through their own speech, through their own faculties....This withdrawal on the part of the Father reaches its acme--brutally, one might say--in the dereliction of the Cross."⁵⁴⁹ The Father's

⁵⁴⁷ In *TD* 4, 371, Balthasar describes "the bi-polar structure" of finite freedom thus: the human person "is 'for himself' and yet owes his being to Another....[This bi-polar structure] belongs so much to the 'nature' of this freedom that it must be defined by the very unity of rest and self-motion (*stasis* and *kinesis*, as we find in Gregory of Nyssa)." For an overview of Gregory's notion of finite freedom, see *TD* 2, 235-38.

⁵⁴⁸ It is important not to confuse Balthasar's notion of God's creative activity as entailing a paternal withdrawal with that proposed by the Jewish Cabbalists. Lacking the theological recognition of a consubstantial Son who is in God and yet is infinitely Other than the Father, and hence who can be the ontic locus of a created world, the Jewish Cabbalists, particularly Isaak Luria, in answer to the question "How can the world exist if God is everywhere?", posit a "kind of contraction of God into himself (*tsimtsum*) in order to make room for creation" (*TD* 2, 263). This view conceives of God as "first of all dominating the entire area" such that, "in order to allow room" for creation, "he must 'withdraw' himself" (*TD* IV, 82; my translation). Balthasar's primary criticism of this position is that it "would threaten the notion of God's immutability" (*TD* 2, 263, n.25). Only the doctrine of the Trinity permits Balthasar to speak of a paternal "self-withdrawal" without vitiating divine immutability, inasmuch as God the Father *is identical* with his eternal generative act as a leaving-free of the infinitely Other. In Balthasar's own words: "Das heisst natürlich nicht, dass er zunächst den ganzen 'Raum' beherrscht, und sich (wie die Kabbala meint) 'zurückziehen' muss, um dem Sohn und dem Geist Raum zu lassen; denn er ist ja Vater nur, sofern er der unvordenklich Zeugende und Freilassende ist" (*TD* IV, 82). For further discussion and criticism of the doctrine of creation put forward by Jewish Cabbalists, see Gershom Scholem, "Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes" in *Eranos-Jahrbuch* XXV (1926), 87-119. Also by the same author, *Die jüdische Mystik in ihren Hauptströmungen* (Zurich: Rheinverlag, 1957), 285-88. Both works are cited by Balthasar in *TD* 2, 263, n.25.

⁵⁴⁹ *TD* 4, 359. If, in this passage, Balthasar does not extend his comparison far enough to include how, during the triduum, the withdrawing Father is nonetheless acting in, through, and together with the Son--speaking through his Word and Son--we can find this missing element in another of his works (*TFG*, 101-102): "[T]he Crucified is the Word which the Father addresses to the world. At this moment, the Word cannot hear itself. It collapses into a cry for the lost God. And when the Evangelists attain to such formulations as 'Forgive them...', 'Today you will be with me in paradise', and 'It is consummated', they are interpreting for us the full heavenly meaning of the Word on the Cross, as

self-expression as Creator is in the manner of a self-concealment, as he brings forward (into existence) a capacity for self-expression that is not his. The greater One permits himself to be known only as taking the lowest place: as the One who exercises absolute freedom to raise up the lowly (“out of nothing”) and set them as rulers over themselves. Far from grasping to himself the glory of sovereign freedom, the Father-Creator identifies his glory with his work of making glorious the autonomous creature, for with the endowment of self-rule and its proper sphere of dominion God grants a proportionate (finite) mode of glory (here understood as that glory which is concomitant with the faculty of sovereignty, prescinding for the moment from *how* the faculty is exercised). “You have made him little less than a god, you have crowned him with glory and splendour, made him lord over the work of your hands, set all things under his feet” (Psalm 8:5-6). To be sure, since finite freedom can only exist as participation in infinite freedom, the self-rule (autonomy) of the creature remains necessarily a joint action with the Father-Creator; finite freedom “needs to have infinite freedom in and above itself [the greater One deigning to dwell in the infinitely lowly], empowering it to realize itself as finite freedom”.⁵⁵⁰ Nevertheless, only if the creature is genuinely left free by the Father-Creator, and precisely within the context of their joint action, is it possible for the creature to be responsible for its self-disposing and, insofar as the latter corresponds to “the eternal law imprinted within it”,⁵⁵¹ to attain merit before God. (With the concept of merit we move from the mere faculty of sovereignty to the manner of its exercise. The latter is critical because, as we already remarked, the glory of infinite freedom does not refer to a neutral capacity of self-disposing as such, but to the freedom whose essence is originatively defined

if these statements were the very voice of the Father...in the Son. We may legitimately receive these words as spoken to us by the Father through the Spirit in the suffering of the Son.”

⁵⁵⁰ *TD* 2, 200. See also *ibid.*, 272.

⁵⁵¹ Augustine, *Lib.; arb.*, I, 6, 15.

by the Father as limitless self-giving, and which divine freedom the Son “consubstantially” receives and exercises as the Father’s perfect Image--the Son who is the prototype of creaturely freedom.)

Now biblical history has revealed that the joint action of infinite and finite freedom on the plane of created nature, entailing the responsibility in self-disposing to which the creature is summoned and enabled by God, has as its sole end the covenant established by God the Father and accomplished through the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ--the covenant of grace whereby the creature is born “into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). This eschatological glory to which the creature is called according to the Father’s purpose is identical with its distinctively filial self-disposing begotten (in grace) by the Father: those who “become conformed to the image of his Son” will be glorified by the Father together with Christ (vv. 17, 28-29). As for the glory *of the Father’s* eschatological work as Creator and Founder of the covenant,⁵⁵² it pleases him (befitting the humility proper to love) that it be manifest in the works of freedom *of his children*: in the first place, in the works of the incarnate Son (“the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus”, v. 39); and in the second place, in those who, living according to “the spirit of adoption as sons” (v. 15), fulfill the requirements of the Law of freedom (vv. 4-5).

We cannot fail to discern the theodramatic content which permeates Balthasar’s doctrine of the Father’s leaving-free his Beloved (uncreated and created). We wish, however, to accentuate this dramatic element by giving further consideration to how the Father-Creator’s activity, with its twofold aspect of latency and accompaniment in relation to finite freedom, permits the possibilities of sin and redemption.

Because the Father out of his infinite freedom creates the human person to share in the trinitarian self-surrender that is absolute love, he establishes him or her in an “area” of self-determination. While the inner-divine presupposition of this “area” of finite freedom is the infinite

“acting area” of the Son, the inner-worldly condition of creaturely autonomy is its situation in a world of finite goods. Now there is a certain darkness appropriate to the creature’s situation of self-determination by free choice, as we saw above.⁵⁵³ This darkness is due to God’s veiling of his infinite light in the world of finite objects, albeit all created things come from him and so point to him as their cause.⁵⁵⁴ Yet it is this darkness in respect to God’s latency in creation that allows for the darkness of sin (Rom 1:21). The Thomist teaching on this matter is summarized by Balthasar as follows:

The fact that, to finite freedom (which is given no fixed signposts but only hints at the direction to be taken), God is latent yields the possibility of *profound error in the realm of the finite*. Foreground goods are available, obscuring our view of goods that are greater but more distant and harder to acquire. Relative goods show us first one aspect and then another, and finite freedom, at will, can cause this or that aspect to glow and become an overpowering attraction. It can also simply turn away from an object of desire. It can be in doubt as to the object of the goal to be pursued, be it a distant goal or one close to hand. It can withdraw from every decision because of the deceptive appearance of things; indeed, according to Thomas, it can at any time “refuse to think of its own happiness.”⁵⁵⁵ The gift of man’s area of freedom, with God latent within it, implies and accepts the possibility of going astray, with all the consequences this may bring....⁵⁵⁶

In point of fact, man fell into error, and when he demanded his share of the inheritance, his Father did not attempt to hold him back but let him go.⁵⁵⁷

From the perspective of the Father we can correlate his “letting go” of the human person to the darkness of sin with the Father’s letting-be of finite freedom to its self-disposing. In delivering over to finite freedom an “area” of self-determination, the Father delivers over the creature to its choice whether or not “to recognize in finite goods the hidden presence of the infinite Giver and

⁵⁵² “God the Father [is] the Creator and the Founder of the Covenant”; *MP*, 209.

⁵⁵³ See chapter III, C.

⁵⁵⁴ See *TD* 2, 225. As a way of reiterating the metaphorical potential of the model of dramatic creativity discussed in chapter I, we can recall the statement of H. Gouhier: “The concrete presence of characters and things causes us to forget that of the author, who, like the creator, wishes us to search for him”, for “he has the privilege of disguising himself as a creator.” Quoted in *TD* 1, 278 from Gouhier’s *L’Essence du théâtre* (1943), 228-229.

⁵⁵⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, q 6, a un.

⁵⁵⁶ *TD* 2, 274-75. Emphasis Balthasar’s.

⁵⁵⁷ *TD* 2, 275.

make an appropriately grateful response”.⁵⁵⁸ If the creature chooses to refuse to acknowledge the Giver in the gifts—including the gift of finite freedom itself—it corrupts its mind to a state of perverse darkness, and its “area” of self-disposing to a state of alienation from God, that is, godlessness (Rom 1:18,29-30). “They did not see fit to acknowledge God, so God delivered them over to their own depraved mind to do what is unseemly” (v. 28).⁵⁵⁹

But not without the promise of redemption, a promise rooted in the twofold character of the Father’s leaving-free: for while, in the sin-conditioned order of creation, God’s *withdrawing from* the creature assumes the form of acknowledging the creature’s hostility to his divine Fatherhood, yet there remains as an indissoluble aspect of the Father’s (gracious) activity his *remaining in* and accompanying finite freedom: hence “the possibility that infinite freedom will follow wayward man into utter alienation”.⁵⁶⁰ Balthasar, in elaborating upon this point, legitimately focuses on “the

⁵⁵⁸ TD 2, 275. Balthasar considers it an open question “whether, since God is latent in creation, finite freedom would have been able to find its way to God by following the path through all finite goods...and do so without being explicitly enlightened as to the ultimate meaning and goal of finite existence”; *ibid.* Elsewhere, Balthasar offers these comments on the possibility of natural knowledge of God: “[T]he First Vatican Council has affirmed without doubt that ‘God as principle and end of all things can be known with certainty by the light of human reason starting from created things’, but has surrounded this affirmation with prudent clauses.* It is only when is added the personal call of God in his revelation of grace and word ‘that what concerns God, who in himself would be inaccessible to human reason, can, in the concrete historical situation of humanity, be known very easily, certainly, and without error.’ By the ‘can’ (*posse*) of the first affirmation nothing more is stated than a real possibility, that is to say: in the order of knowledge and of will, the horizon of the human spirit is so open that it *formally* includes its own character of created reality and thereby the idea of the Creator; yet this horizon opened onto God can be *materially* disturbed and impeded by insufficient and perverted ideas that claim to have absolute value.” “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 33. My translation. Emphasis Balthasar’s. See DS 3004, 3005, and 3026.

* In the footnote he writes: “In order to interpret the text, it is necessary to make the following remarks: (1) For the Council, *it is not a question of the quaestio facti, but of the capacity of human reason for knowledge of God* (Mansi 50, 76 s; 51,272). (2) By the words ‘*naturali rationis limine e rebus creatis*,’ the text indicates *the way to this knowledge of God* (Mansi 51,272). (3) *The Council’s affirmation is applied to all the states of the human being, concrete and possible* (Mansi 51,272). (4) The natural knowability of the attributes mentioned in the text is not clearly defined (Mansi 51, 39 s). (5) *It is by design that the Council has chosen the prudent expression ‘cognosci’ and not ‘demonstrari’* (Mansi 51,276; cf. to the contrary DS 3538). (6) The affirmation of ‘*certo cognosci posse*’ (DS 3004) must be understood at the same time as the complementary affirmation to DS 3005.” Emphasis Balthasar’s.

On the question of the possibility of natural knowledge of God, see also Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.* I, q. 13, a. 5 and 10; E. Pryzwara, *Analogia Entis I* (Einsiedeln, 1962), 118; and W. Kasper, *GJC*, 69.

⁵⁵⁹ With Balthasar we understand that Paul in the first chapter of Romans considers finite freedom as it is ever summoned and claimed within the ambit of its supernatural vocation.

⁵⁶⁰ “[M]an’s hopeless straying about in finitude brings to light the center of God’s plan for the world, which up to now was hidden and latent: namely, the possibility that infinite freedom will follow wayward man into utter alienation.” TD 2, 275.

Father's Word, the Son, who becomes 'flesh'". But it is just as legitimate, and certainly consistent with Balthasar's overall thought, to develop this point by considering the Father in relation to the Son whom he sends and *in whom* the sending Father can be said to accompany finite freedom. Since the Father, in his eternal act of generating infinite filial freedom over against himself, simultaneously (albeit non-necessarily) creates finite freedom in the "acting area" of the Son, we can say that the generating Father from before all time⁵⁶¹ delivers over his Son to follow finite freedom into its perverted "place" of alienation, into the darkness of its divorce.⁵⁶² "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk 15:35). The Son who is "made to be sin" cries out to the Father from the darkness of finite freedom's state of disobedience; yet his cry, when viewed in the light of trinitarian love, is best seen as a *response* to the Father's first and searching cry to finite freedom in its sin: "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). The Son can answer for us to the Father from our place of hiding (Gen 3:8), but must thereby experience the Father as hidden from his presence. Yet the Father in fact cannot be absent: "what is 'experienced' is the opposite of what the facts indicate".⁵⁶³ Inasmuch as we have already spoken of the Father's uninterrupted accompaniment of the Son in his mission, let it suffice simply to add that precisely this (*ad extra*) act of accompanying the Son is the modality whereby the Father "searches" for his lost creature until he "finds" it in the crucified Son's return of love. And when we consider that the Father engenders the Son's perfect

⁵⁶¹ It cannot be otherwise, for God has no ideas or choices that subsequently occur to him. See G.F. O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 37-38.

⁵⁶² "The 'hour'", writes Balthasar in *TD* 4, 334, "calls for an *inner* appropriation of what is ungodly and hostile to God, an identification with that darkness of alienation from God into which the sinner falls as a result of his No"--albeit not an identification of will with the actual No of sin itself, see *TD* 4, 336. For Balthasar's extensive treatment of the Son's vicarious representation of sinners, see *TD* 4, 332-38, and *SI*, 401-22. Among the theologians who agree with Balthasar on this issue we can list J. Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1988), 157 and N. Hoffmann, "Christ and the world's evil", in *Communio* 17 (Spring, 1990), 57.

⁵⁶³ *TD* 4, 336. Balthasar goes on to cite V. Taylor: "The depths of the saying [Christ's cry of dereliction on the Cross] are too deep to be plumbed, but the least inadequate interpretations are those that find in it a sense of desolation in which Jesus felt the horror of sin so deeply that for a time the closeness of his communion with the Father was obscured. Glover writes: 'I have sometimes thought there never was an utterance that reveals more amazingly the distance between feeling and fact.'" V. Taylor, *St. Mark*, 2d ed. (1966), 594.

correspondence (with respect to the Son's exercise of both divine and human freedom) as the Sender who remains at work in the One Sent, we are led to understand that from eternity the Father delivers over *himself* in delivering over his Son to follow humanity into its sin-conditioned state of estrangement. But here we begin to anticipate what will be a central theme in our next few sections.

D.2. *The paternal leaving-free (letting-be) is generative of its filial counterpart*

Having already established that the Father's leaving-free is one with his act of generating, and having discussed its twofold dynamic of withdrawing from and remaining in the Son as integral to the generation of consubstantial filial freedom (as well as to the creation of finite freedom to be consummated in the order of grace/adoptive divine filiation), we can extend our inquiry and ask after the generative power of this modality of paternal love in bringing forth its filial counterpart.

Once we grant that the generating Father allows for a distinct hypostatic exercise of infinite freedom over against himself, we can say with Balthasar that there is in the Son a "letting-be" or a "letting-happen" [*Geschehenlassen*] that corresponds to the Father's self-giving, and "which is just as eternal as the act by which it is brought forth; indeed it is posed within this act".⁵⁶⁴ Accordingly, generation in God can be understood to entail, on the Father's side, a paternal ability to let-be [*Sein-lassen Können*], or what comes to the same thing, a paternal disposition of availability [*Verfügbarkeit*] conveying an unoriginated assent to the filial mode of divine autonomy. And on the Son's side, there is an ability to let oneself come forth [*Sich-entspringen-lassen Können*]⁵⁶⁵--the

⁵⁶⁴ My translation of *TD* IV, 75: "Dem entspricht im Sohn...ein Geschehenlassen, das ebenso ewig ist wie der hervor bringende Akt, somit im Akt mitgesetzt ist." Recall in addition *TD* 2, 259: "[E]ach [divine hypostasis] subsists by being *let* be"; the German original (*TD* II/1, p.235): "...ihre Subsistenz immer auch auf einem Sein-lassen beruht". Emphasis Balthasar's.

⁵⁶⁵ See *TD* IV, 75.

ability, in other words, “to collaborate by letting himself be begotten”.⁵⁶⁶ Recalling Balthasar’s remark that “the realms of freedom in God come about both through the self-giving of the hypostases and by each hypostasis *in turn* letting the other two ‘be’” [*Sein-lasse*],⁵⁶⁷ we can readily interpret it according to the trinitarian movement of divine love, and so locate in the Father the original and originative disposition in which self-giving and letting-be coincide. Thus, we are directed to understand the Father’s self-giving to include, as intrinsic to it, a modality of letting-be which begets *in turn* its imaging counterpart in the Son. For indeed every aspect of the Father’s way of being God is generative in nature.

As soon as we take up the task of presenting an adequate elucidation of the generative nature of the Father-Begetter’s manner of leaving-free, it becomes evident that it cannot be done without, at the same time, illuminating the theo-drama involved. The dramatic features of the Father’s generative act come to light precisely insofar as we perceive therein another twofold dynamic inscribed at the heart of the paternal leaving-free: namely, the Father’s *disposing of* the Son and his *being disposed of by* the Son.

Let us consider the former component first: the Father’s disposing of the Son. Already in Section D of this chapter we noted that in generating the eternal Son, the Father determines the form of divinity as kenotic self-giving in which “poverty and wealth are one and the same”.⁵⁶⁸ We understood the “form of God” (Phil 2:6) which the Son receives as in no way undefined or undetermined, but rather as always already constituted by the Father’s self-disposing to the form and measure of emptying oneself of all for the sake of the Other. We now extend this line of

⁵⁶⁶ TD IV, 76. My translation.

⁵⁶⁷ TD 2, 262. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁶⁸ TD 3, 518. In TD IV, 77, Balthasar quotes with approval A. von Speyr’s depiction of the relationship between divine generative activity and divine filial receptivity as “zwischen prägender Liebe und liebendem Geschehenlassen”; from von Speyr’s *Achtzehn Psalmen*, 155. To consider the Father’s generative act as premierly determinative of the Son’s mode of infinite freedom is to acknowledge an ontological priority proper to the Father’s

thought by arguing that since what the Father does is nothing other than to beget this “appropriate response” constitutive of the Son, and since its appropriateness is determined by the Father’s archetypal generative mode of divine intellection and volition, we can view the Father’s act of begetting under the aspect of a *disposing of* the Son.⁵⁶⁹ Once again Balthasar’s articulation of this mystery approaches from the side of the Son: “the Son, in being begotten, leaves ‘the Father the entirety of his necessary will [*Nezessitätswille*],...in no way interposing his begotten will as if to determine somehow his own formation’.”⁵⁷⁰ If, moreover, we are to take seriously the identity of necessity and freedom in the triune God, we must regard the Father’s disposing of the Son to be one with his leaving-free the Son: while the Father gives the Son the distance necessary for autonomy (lets him be), nonetheless “the Son acts autonomously only within the Father’s permission and summons [*Erlaubnis und Aufforderung*] to be free and autonomous”.⁵⁷¹

Next we turn our attention to the second component of the twofold dynamic in question: the Father’s *being disposed of* by the Son. Insofar as the Father allows the Son a distinct mode of knowledge and decision in relation to his generative act,⁵⁷² the Father in effect delivers over his Fatherhood to the Son’s deeming and disposing. For Balthasar, the Son’s responsive assent in letting the Father father him is a Yes to the mutual relationship that proceeds principally from the Father’s intention and which is directed also to the Holy Spirit who personifies the eternal

exercise of the divine nature according to the order of the trinitarian processions--a priority determinative in function that is manifest in the relationship between freedom of the Sender and of the One Sent in the economy of salvation.

⁵⁶⁹ The German original of *TD* 3, 39, refers to the Son as the One entirely disposed of [*der Allverfügte*] in relation to the Father who is the All-disposing One [*der Allverfügende*]. Although this passage deals explicitly with the economic Trinity, the latter is precisely the ultimate basis upon which we can make affirmations about the immanent Trinity.

⁵⁷⁰ *TD* IV, 76. Balthasar is quoting A. von Speyr, *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 59. My translation.

⁵⁷¹ My translation of *TD* IV, 77: “Einmal wird der Sohn in seinem Gezeugtwerden ‘dem Vater die Ganzheit seines Nezessitätswillens’ lassen, so dass er ‘in keiner Weise seinen mit ihm gezeugten freien Willen einschiebt, um irgendwie an seiner eigenen Gestaltung mitzuformen’.” Inner citation is from A. von Speyr’s *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 51.

⁵⁷² In *TD* IV, 445, Balthasar writes about “die dreieinige göttliche Freiheit, die innerhalb ihrer Einheit jeder Hypostase ihre eigene Sicht- und Entscheidungsweise belässt”.

unanimity between Father and Son.⁵⁷³ “God the Father focuses on this mutuality already in the act of generative self-giving.”⁵⁷⁴ If we have said the same with respect to the economic relationship between the Father and the incarnate Son (chapter II, E.3), we must not fail to affirm its inner-divine ground: namely, that the Father establishes an interpersonal relationship of exchange and dialogue between Begetter and Begotten, in which his Fatherhood is eternally consummated only as coincident with the Son’s engendered collaborative assent.

In his effort to sketch the dramatic features of the eternal event of begetting in God, and in accordance with his usage of an intersubjective ontology of love as a conceptual framework within which to insert the biblical data, Balthasar proposes that we see the mystery of this primal event as indicating that “God is considerate of God”.⁵⁷⁵ The Father’s disposing of the Son shows paternal consideration, for in giving over the divinity as determined by his self-disposing the Father places his paternal will (one with his Paternity) at the Son’s disposal.⁵⁷⁶ Thus the Father is the first to make request of the Other, in consideration of the Other’s freedom. Out of love the Father defers to the Son the joy of fulfilling requests, and thereby grants the Son a certain precedence (that belongs to the Son as the image of the Father-Initiator).⁵⁷⁷ Now precisely this paternal disposition of consideration, bespeaking as it does absolute and unconditional love, begets its filial counterpart: the Son who is considerate of the Father’s freedom. It is the Son’s bliss not simply to grant the Father’s request, but to make the paternal request his own. That is, the Son in his turn makes request of the Father to allow him to accomplish the paternal will.⁵⁷⁸ “In the Father’s act of

⁵⁷³ See *TD* 2, 267; *TD* 3, 511; *TD* 4, 331; and *W&R2*, 34.

⁵⁷⁴ *WEL*, 15.

⁵⁷⁵ *TD* IV, 78: “[E]s ‘zum Wesen Gottes gehört, Rücksicht zu kennen. Gott nimmt auf Gott Rücksicht’.” Balthasar is quoting A. von Speyr from her work *Kath. Briefe* vol. II, 161.

⁵⁷⁶ *TD* IV, 77: “[D]er Vater hat dem Sohn alles gegeben’ und ‘mit diesem Alles auch seinen Willen zur Verfügung gestellt’.” Inner citation is from A. von Speyr’s *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 51.

⁵⁷⁷ See *TD* IV, 78; and A. von Speyr’s *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 53-57.

⁵⁷⁸ “[S]ince each hypostasis in God possesses the same freedom and omnipotence, we can speak of there being reciprocal petition [*gegenseitiger Bitte*]”; *TD* 2, 257-58.

generating there lies, as it were, a request addressed to the Son, who on his side wishes nothing other than to meet the paternal will with his entire filial freedom.”⁵⁷⁹ Let us reiterate that if the Son “wishes nothing other than” to accept the Father’s will (elsewhere Balthasar says that the Son “cannot but place himself at the disposal of his generation”⁵⁸⁰) this does not deprive the eternal moment of its drama, since this filial disposition is the infinitely free response of love engendered by love.⁵⁸¹ Consequently, given that the trinitarian event entails the correlates of reciprocal consideration [*Rücksicht*] and reciprocal request [*Bitte*]--as well as, by clear implication, reciprocal contemplation [*Betrachtung*]⁵⁸²--we can offer the following in summary: without temporal succession, in perfect simultaneity with the Father’s generative act, the Son knows that the Father disposes of himself as one who allows himself to be disposed of by the Other (in consideration of filial freedom), and in beholding the way in which the Father exercises infinite freedom the Son is incited to dispose of himself likewise vis-à-vis his generating source. This is the basis (a dramatic one!) for Balthasar’s affirmation that the Son “is always himself by allowing himself to be generated and by allowing the Father to do with him as he pleases”.⁵⁸³ What the Son knows in the immediacy of his being begotten is the Father-Lover who shows the Son everything that he does—the Father conveys, in leaving the Son free to dispose of his Paternity, an unoriginated assent to the filial mode of divine autonomy, and this paternal disposition of availability evokes as its constant result an originated assent, an answering availability--thus does the Father dispose of the Son.

⁵⁷⁹ My translation of *TD IV*, 77: “In der Zeugung des Vaters liegt wie eine Bitte an den Sohn, der seinerseits nichts anderes wünscht, als dem väterlichen Willen mit seiner ganzen sohnhaften Freiheit entgegenzukommen.”

⁵⁸⁰ *TD IV*, 76; see also A. von Speyr’s *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 25.

⁵⁸¹ *TD IV*, 92: “Man erinnert sich an die personale Gegenwart in Gott, die als eine Gegen-Wendung erkannt wurde, als die Hinwendung des Anders gegen das Eine, und weil diese Wendung erwirkt ist durch die (zeugende) Wendung des Einen zum Anders hin, liegt darin die Gegenseitigkeit.”

⁵⁸² See *TD IV*, 77-79.

⁵⁸³ *TD 2*, 256. Balthasar makes a similar statement in *Credo*, 78: “[I]f the Father generates the Son in love, there is no moment at which the Son would not already also, in the same love, both be allowing himself to be generated and returning this love in the Holy Spirit.” See also *TD 2*, 257 and *TD IV*, 82.

Implicit in the foregoing reflections is the insight that, in the Father-Begetter, the ability to let-be which is integral to absolute self-giving embraces both omnipotence and powerlessness [*Allmacht und Unmacht*].⁵⁸⁴ That the Father allows the Son a distinct mode of divine autonomy in relation to his paternal activity bespeaks a “genuine giving-over of power” [*wirklicher Machtübergabe*] which nevertheless--indeed, precisely as such--is of infinite generative power.⁵⁸⁵ Far from overpowering the Son, the Father disposes of him by *empowering* him to dispose of the divinity to the equal extreme of selflessness. The Son’s “eternal Yes to being-given-himself as consubstantially divine” is an entirely grateful “Yes to the primal kenosis of the Father in the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness”.⁵⁸⁶ The Father is all-powerful, since he can give without limit. At the same time, his is an omnipotent powerlessness, since nothing is as truly powerful as the giving wherein he subjects his Paternity to the Son’s consideration and decision.⁵⁸⁷ Indeed, the infinite power of paternal love’s powerlessness is shown in the Son’s limitless assent to being fathered. But let there be no misunderstanding: it is not the Son’s modality of “letting-be” that renders the Father’s act omnipotent; to the contrary, it is the modality of “letting-be” proper to the Father that engenders its answering reflection in the One who lets himself be generated.

According to Balthasar, then, at the base of the inner-trinitarian drama lies the generative efficacy of the Father’s love, an efficacy which, as the power to beget perfectly reciprocating (filial) love--that is, as the power to dispose of the Other/Son--can be adequately considered only with respect to, indeed as inseparable from, the Father’s allowing himself to be disposed of by the Other. It is precisely this eternal “moment” of the trinitarian event, when the Father’s “form of God” as the

⁵⁸⁴ See *TD* 4, 325; and *TD* IV, 65.

⁵⁸⁵ See *TD* IV, 57-58.

⁵⁸⁶ I have slightly modified G. Harrison’s translation in *TD* 4, 326. The original text (*TD* IV, 303) reads: “Die besagte Verdankung ist das ewige Ja zum (Sich-) Gegebensein als gleich-absoluter Gott, ein Ja zur Ur-Kenosis des Vaters als Einheit von Allmacht (des Alles-geben-Könnens) und Unmacht (da nichts anderes wahrhaft mächtig ist als die Gabe).”

⁵⁸⁷ See *TD* IV, 445.

archetypal determinant of Sonship is delivered over to the Son's deeming, that Balthasar identifies as the crux of the primal drama. He will even regard this event as pregnant with a paternal "risk" which should be understood as an utterly positive aspect of the absolute earnestness of paternal love in leaving-free the Beloved.⁵⁸⁸

From this vantage point let us turn our attention to the economic Trinity. Since in chapter II (Sections E.1.-E.2.2.), and on the basis of a Christology "from below", we have already established that the divine freedom of the Father-Sender is characterized by a dialectic of disposing of, and being disposed of by, the One whom he sends--a dialectic, moreover, which is generative of its imaging counterpart in the incarnate Son--it would be superfluous merely to retrace our steps starting "from above". However, what we have just remarked about the Father's allowing himself to be disposed of, specifically as regards its power to beget the correspondence of the Son, makes it possible for us to elucidate the patrogen(n)etic origin of an aspect of the Son's mission with which we have not yet dealt. The particular aspect in question concerns the notion of "*die Hinterlegung*": the Son's depositing, so to speak, his divine power and glory with the Father in being sent unto the Cross.⁵⁸⁹

Balthasar's own discussion of this notion is presented in the final volume of his *Theo Drama*, where its Christological-soteriological content receives a trinitarian foundation.⁵⁹⁰ There

⁵⁸⁸ See *TD* 4, 327.

⁵⁸⁹ The theme of the identity of omnipotence and powerlessness first appears in patristic theology in connection with the mystery of the Incarnation, or more specifically, the surrender (*kenosis*) of the *forma Dei* by the pre-existent Son (Phil 2:6-11). In the attempt to explain the possibility of such an act, Hilary maintains that the divine Son "himself is made empty, within his own power" ("*intra suam ipse vacuefactus potestatem*", in *De Trin.* 9, 41 [PL 10, 314B]). "But Hilary's reflections", in Balthasar's view, "focus too much on the divine 'nature' and its inherent powerfulness", and as such are representative of the overall approach which predominates in classical Western theological discourse. The theme receives "deeper illumination", however, when the starting-point shifts from the divine nature to the relationships among the divine Persons in God. Balthasar credits Bulgakov with contributing some fundamental ideas to the advancement of this explicitly trinitarian approach. See S. Bulgakov, *op. cit.* For Balthasar's remarks, see *GL* 7, 212-6.

⁵⁹⁰ See *TD* IV, 232-40, the section entitled "Trennung als Einigung". For a condensed treatment of this Christological-soteriological theme, see the chapter "Descent into Hell", in *SI*, 408-13.

he states that this “*Hinterlegung*” (leaving-with or leaving-on-deposit) is “a notion which only recapitulates what is described in Phil 2:6-7 and which is rooted in the absolute return-movement of the eternal Son to the Father (*eis ton kolpon tou Patros*, Jn 1:18; cf. 1Jn 1:2).”⁵⁹¹ The substance of Balthasar’s treatment is aimed at demonstrating “that the God-forsakenness of the Son during his passion is a modality of his union with the Father.”⁵⁹² We offer the following points for consideration as a synthetic overview of his thought. Inasmuch as the Son allows himself to be entirely disposed of by the Father, he leaves with the Father his divine filiation with respect to both his *ad intra processio* and his *ad extra missio*. And inasmuch as the Son is sent by the Father to assume the sin of the world--which in this respect means separation (as alienation) [*Trennung als Entfremdung*] from the Father, so in this respect the Son’s leaving with the Father his divine filiation means assuming a state of self-separation/-alienation [*Selbstentfremdung*].⁵⁹³ Nonetheless, because the Son proves capable of bearing the world’s sin and expiating it entirely, his modality of sin-conditioned separation must “stand at the center of his mission” as a function of his coming

⁵⁹¹ My translation. Here is the entire passage found in *TD IV*, 232: “Voraussetzung für das Verständnis ist der Begriff der ‘*Hinterlegung*’ (der göttlichen Macht und Herrlichkeit des Sohnes) beim Vater, ein Begriff, der nur zusammenfasst, was Phil 2:6-7 beschreibt, und was in der restlosen Hinbewegung des ewigen Sohnes zum Vater hin (*eis ton kolpon tou Patros*, Joh 1,18; vgl. 1Joh 1,2) gründet.”

⁵⁹² *TD IV*, 232. My translation and emphasis.

⁵⁹³ While our presentation of these points constitutes a synthetic overview derived for the most part from Balthasar’s remarks in *TD IV* and *SI*, it is with a passage from *ICY*, 319 that we wish to begin: “[J]ust as the Son, as God, eternally receives full divinity from his Father, so he eternally gives himself, all that he has and is, back to the Father in gratitude: it is at the Father’s sole disposal. Thus in some way we can understand that, when the Son’s eternal ‘procession’ from the Father takes the shape of a ‘mission’ to the world, the Son deposits his divine attributes (without losing them) with the Father in heaven. For we read that he ‘emptied himself’ of his divine form (Phil 2:7)....God’s eternal, threefold life is evidently so alive that it can encompass this possibility.” Turning now to *TD IV*, 233, we note that Balthasar asserts the following: “Während der Verhüllung bis zur Gottverlassenheit ‘lag die Gewissheit der Erbschaft innerhalb der Sohnschaft hinterlegt’;” (inner citation is from A. von Speyr’s *Sieg der Liebe*, 48). And *ibid.*, (he is quoting von Speyr from *3 Jo*, 134): “Bildlich gesprochen ist es, als hätte der Sohn sich bei der Menschwerdung vom Vater getrennt, aber sein ganzes Vermächtnis wäre beim Vater zurückgeblieben.” Finally, in *SI*, 409, Balthasar states that “the experience of the abyss he [the Son] undergoes is both entirely in him (insofar as he comes to know in himself the full measure of the dead sinner’s distance from God) as well as at the same time entirely outside of him, because what he experiences is utterly foreign to him (as the eternal Son of the Father): on Good Friday he is himself entirely alienated from himself.”

forth from and returning to the Father.⁵⁹⁴ Indeed, since the Son's self-abandonment to this sin-conditioned separation is one with his self-abandonment to the Father, it is a filial self-abandonment reflecting the eternal love of the Father for the Son.⁵⁹⁵ Here, as in his theodramatic soteriology (*Theo-Drama* vol. 4), Balthasar once again identifies the condition for the possibility of this separation-in-union to be "the infinite distinction [*Differenz*] of the Persons within the one [divine] essence". "In virtue of this difference, which due to its relationality allows at the same time for the 'leaving-on-deposit', the *Cross* can be the revelation of the inner-divine essence of God."⁵⁹⁶ A passage of Adrienne von Speyr contributes the final salient points to Balthasar's treatment of the Son's "*Hinterlegung*". With Balthasar we quote it in full.

When the Son says of the Father: he never leaves me alone (Jn 8:29), he is thinking also of the moment at the Cross, when even in the most profound forsakenness [*Verlassenheit*] he will remain always with the Father. He knows that in this dereliction, when the Father himself will also be forsaken [*verlassen sein wird*], he will be found in absolute unity with him, a unity that remains possible in love. ...[T]he eternal generation of the Son encompasses also the hour of darkness on the Cross....The relation of the Son to the generating Father remains intact.⁵⁹⁷

If, in our judgment, Balthasar succeeds in demonstrating that the Son's depositing his divine filiation with the Father is a modality of his being generated [*Gezeugtwerden*], such that the "*Hinterlegung*" can be understood as the ontic and explanatory ground of the Son's ability to reveal

⁵⁹⁴ *TD* IV, 236: "Die im Tragen der Weltschuld erlebte 'Trennung' war keine Entfernung vom Vater, denn (der Sohn) richtete sich dabei immer wieder nach dem Vater aus, um genau in der Mitte seiner Sendung zu stehen". Inner citation is from A. von Speyr's 3 *Jo*, 474.

⁵⁹⁵ See *TD* IV, 233-34; and A. von Speyr's 2 *Jo*, 327.

⁵⁹⁶ My translation. The entire passage from *TD* IV, 234-35 reads: "Das über die 'Hinterlegung' Gesagte darf nicht vermuten lassen, die 'Trennung', die inchoativ in der Menschwerdung liegt, sich aber voll in der Passion auswirkt, entbehre des letzten Ernstes. Das Gegenteil ist wahr, was aus der trinitarischen Voraussetzung--der unendlichen Differenz der Personen innerhalb des einen Wesens--schon ersichtlich sein sollte. Kraft dieser Differenz, die zugleich in ihrer Relationalität die 'Hinterlegung' erlaubt, kann das *Kreuz* zur Offenbarung des innersten Wesens Gottes werden: sowohl der Differenz der Personen (die in der Verlassenheit am klarsten hervortritt) wie der Einheit ihres Wesens, die in der Einheit des Erlösungsplanes sichtbar wird. Einzig ein Gott-Mensch kann die ganze Gottfremde der Weltsünde in seiner Differenz gegenüber dem Vater wegsühnen." Emphasis Balthasar's.

⁵⁹⁷ This passage combines remarks of A. von Speyr taken from her works 2*Jo*, 219 and *Psl* 15, and quoted by Balthasar in *TD* IV, 238. It is in light of this passage that we ought to interpret another comment of von Speyr: "[I]m Augenblick der Trennung am Kreuz, da man auf der Welt nur noch den verlassen Menschen sieht, die Gottheit des Sohnes beim Vater hinterlegt ist." From A. von Speyr's 3 *Jo*, 171; quoted in *TD* IV, 233.

his trinitarian communion precisely in alienation (from both the Father and his own Sonship), nevertheless Balthasar is capable of a longer stride than he has taken here. For he falls short of interpreting the Son's "leaving-on-deposit" in terms of a consubstantially divine response *to* the Father's archetypal mode of love, *as* "the Father's Word, image and expression".⁵⁹⁸ That is to say, Balthasar neglects in this instance to be guided by his fundamental insight that the Father's act of generating entails depositing his Paternity with the Son, and consequently omits to indicate how *the Father's* God-forsakenness during the passion of the Son can be understood as a modality of his union with the Son. We will retrieve this insight and apply it in an explicitly thematized fashion in order to arrive at what we have called the "patrogen(n)etic" origin of the Christological "*Hinterlegung*".

Our first step will be to secure and clarify the inner-divine ground and presupposition of this mystery. The Father's act of generating, as we have previously observed, is eternally consummated only as coincident with the Son's returning of love. Insofar as the Father allows the Son a distinct mode of knowledge and decision in relation to his generative act, the Father in effect delivers over his Fatherhood to the Son's deeming and disposing. We can affirm, therefore, that it is the Father who is "hierarchically" first to deposit his divine power and glory with the Son in begetting him, insofar as the Father leaves the perfect expression of his divine Paternity to the Son's (begotten) collaborative response.

Furthermore, since whatever can be said of the Father's act of generating must be consonant with the fact that the Father is at work in the Son, begetting him as his imaging counterpart (Jn 5:19-20; 8:28-29; 14:9-11), we must refrain from thinking of the Father's leaving his Paternity with the Son after the manner of a theological geometry that would conceive the Father to be in one location and his Paternity in another, and hence would obliterate the infinite generative presence of

⁵⁹⁸ See *TD* 2, 267.

the Father *in* the Son.⁵⁹⁹ The way in which Balthasar articulated the mystery of the paternal kenosis can be of help to us here.⁶⁰⁰ We need only slightly modify his assertions in terms of our present inquiry, expanding them just enough to encompass the dramatic context of the Father's generating the Son *as a distinct hypostatic mode of infinite freedom over against himself*. Certainly we cannot say that the Father delivers over his Paternity in generating the Son in such a manner that, as he leaves it with the Son, he does not retain it at the same time; otherwise he would really cease to be the Father.⁶⁰¹ (For God the Father *is* the subsistent relation of divine Paternity.) Rather, both must be held simultaneously and as identical: on the one hand, the Father's self-delivering-over which engages the totality of his Person and hence of his Fatherhood; and on the other, the absolute and eternal integrity of the Person who *is* the divine Fatherhood only in this delivering-over. Far from losing himself in leaving his Paternity with the Son, God is always Father precisely in his

⁵⁹⁹ According to Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.* I, q. 42, a. 5, the Father and the Son are in each other according to essence, relation, and origin. "The Father is in the Son by his essence, for the Father is his own essence, and communicates his essence to the Son not by any change on his part. Hence it follows that, as the Father's essence is in the Son, the Father himself is in the Son; likewise, since the Son is his own essence, it follows that he himself is in the Father in whom is his essence....It is also manifest that, as regards the relations, each of two relative opposites is in the concept of the other. Regarding origin, furthermore, it is clear that the procession of the intelligible word is not outside the intellect, inasmuch as it remains in the utterer of the word; and likewise what is expressed by the word is contained in it." Thomas' comments here are representative of the West's approach to trinitarian doctrine, and consequently exhibit both its strengths and its weaknesses. As we remarked in the Introduction to our study, the particular weakness that comes to light during the modern period concerns an inadequate explication of the Trinity in terms of the mutuality of interpersonal self-disposing (the *dialogue* between the hypostatic modes of infinite freedom) constitutive of Fatherhood and Sonship in God. In the thought of Thomas--in this case as regards the mutual indwelling of Father and Son--the potential for such an explication remains for the most part latent. It is Balthasar's contribution to provide indications as to how this mutual indwelling can be understood with respect to the mutuality of self-giving (between Father and Son) identical with the trinitarian essence.

⁶⁰⁰ See chapter III, C.

⁶⁰¹ Compare our statement with the teaching of the Fourth Lateran Council, DS 805: "One cannot say that He [the Father] gave Him [the Son] a part of His substance and retained a part for Himself, since the substance of the Father is indivisible, being entirely simple. Nor can one say that in generating the Father transferred His substance to the Son, as though He gave it to the Son in such a way as not to retain it for Himself, for so He would have ceased to be substance. It is therefore clear that the Son, being born, received the substance of the Father without diminution, and thus Father and Son have the same substance." If the formulation of the Council is primarily concerned with maintaining the oneness of the divine substance in consideration of the real distinction of Persons, our statement, which treats of the Father's indwelling the Son, is not concerned with reasoning to the Son's consubstantiality with the Father (since we have already done this in chapter II of our study) but with the theodramatic nature of the Son's consubstantiality insofar as it manifests itself as the ability to find oneself in the Other by abandoning oneself to the Other, an ability rendered reasonable in light of a "metaphysic of love" (to use the expression of the ITC). Translation of DS 805 from *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*. Revised Edition. J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, eds. (New York: Alba House, 1982).

unoriginated abandoning of self, which (as we have already indicated) is such as to necessarily engender a corresponding self-abandonment constitutive of the Son.⁶⁰² Thus we can understand that the Father who surrenders his Paternity to the Son finds himself in the Son--finds himself, however, not as a static deposit but as the infinitely vital and archetypal source of the consubstantial love which the Son is reciprocally. So too the Son in surrendering himself to the Father--leaving his divine filiation to the Father's deeming and disposing--finds himself in the Father as the one ever beloved and affirmed.

Now once we presuppose the creation, the *ad intra processio* and the *ad extra missio* "are one and the same as far as the divine Persons are concerned".⁶⁰³ In the words of Thomas Aquinas: "*sicut processio temporalis non est alia quam processio aeterna essentialiter, sed addit aliquem respectum ad effectum temporalem, ita etiam missio visibilis non est alia essentialiter ab invisibili missione....*"⁶⁰⁴ Several conclusions follow from this. First, as far as the Person of the Son is concerned, his coming forth from the Father as the Beloved returning to the Father (in which return his divine filiation is consummated) is one and the same with respect to both its *ad intra* and *ad extra* modalities. A like assertion can be made about the Person of the Father in regard to his generating/sending the Son, the consummation of which (i.e., of his divine Paternity) is intrinsically concomitant with the Son's reciprocation. Accordingly, if the Father in generating delivers over his paternal will to the Son's disposal, so the Father in what concerns the temporal sending "entrusts

⁶⁰² TD 4, 329-30: For the Son, his being-generated as consubstantially free "means making a fitting response to the Father's total gift of himself..., a response that is made in absolute spontaneity and in absolute 'obedience' to the Father (and 'obedience here means the readiness to respond and correspond to the Father). Both take place in a generous, eucharistic abandon [*Gelöstheit*] that matches the limitless proportions of the divine nature", or better, the limitless proportions of the Father's abandon.

⁶⁰³ TD IV, 55.

⁶⁰⁴ Thomas Aquinas, I *Sent.*, d.16, q.1, a.1, sol. Thomas abbreviates this teaching when he states: "*utraque processio dicitur missio*"; *Ibid.*, d.15, q.4, a.1, sol.

his (primary) intention to the Son simultaneously with the generation”.⁶⁰⁵ What the paternal will intends (expressive of the Father’s selfless love) is the perfection and glorification of divine Sonship with respect to both the *processio* and the *missio*, an intention which being answered to by the Son’s distinct mode of infinite freedom results in the perfection and glorification of divine Fatherhood. Consequently, we may reaffirm our central point in view of the divine economy: there belongs to the ontological priority of the Father-Sender a depositing of his Paternity with the Son during the earthly mission.

When we consider, moreover, that the Father sends the Son to assume the place of God-forsaking sinners (“in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering”, Rom 8:3), we can understand that, in this respect, the Father’s depositing of his Paternity with the Son takes the (economic) form of allowing himself to be forsaken. From this point of view Balthasar will admit the notion that the Father offers up himself (albeit in a non-incarnational manner) in offering up the Son for the sin of the world.⁶⁰⁶ If previously in section D.1. when discussing the twofold character of the Father’s modality of leaving-free we interpreted the Father’s power to separate himself from his own [*Sich-vom-Eigenen-abscheiden-Können*] exclusively in reference to the Father’s withdrawing from the One being begotten (the condition for the possibility of the Son’s being forsaken), with our present observations we are concerned with showing that this paternal mode of infinite power entails as well the Father’s ability to separate himself from his Paternity, in the sense of leaving the consummation of his Fatherhood to the Son’s cooperation (the condition for the possibility of the

⁶⁰⁵ TD IV, 77: “Wenn daher der Vater eine (primäre) Absicht--etwa bezüglich der Gestalt der geplanten Schöpfung--hat, so überlässt er diese mit der Zeugung zusammen dem Sohn, ‘wie Ansätze, Ursprünge, die vom Sohn übernommen werden können’, dem es überlassen wird, die ‘väterlichen Absichten helfend weiterzuführen’.” Inner citation is from A. von Speyr’s *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 55. Balthasar quotes von Speyr again in TD IV, 76: “Der [menschwerdende] Sohn tut nicht lieber als den Willen den Vaters, weil er ihn schon im Gezeugtenwerden vollbringt”; (from *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 59).

⁶⁰⁶ In TD IV, 239, Balthasar quotes von Speyr with approval: “‘Erst im Opfer, das in der Trennung liegt, kann sich der Inhalt der Liebe entfalten’; so ‘vollendet der Vater sein Opfer, indem er opfernd sein Liebstes aus dem Jenseits ins Diesseits hinein übergibt’.” Inner citation is from A. von Speyr’s *I Jo*, 377-78.

Father's being forsaken). Similarly, just as in section D.1. it was necessary to maintain the indissolubility of the Father's withdrawing from and remaining in the Son, so here too we need contend that the Father's forsakenness [*Verlassenheit*] during the passion of the Son attests to his absolute unity with the Son. This can be approached by arguing that since the Father's forsakenness is a manifestation of the Father's ability to leave [*verlassen*] his Paternity with the Son, and because the Father's leaving-with is integral to his leaving-free the Son in being begotten, the paternal *Verlassenheit* proves to be a constituent of the Father's generating the Son in the order of redemption. And if we substitute the notion of self-alienation [*Selbstentfremdung*] for that of forsakenness, we are saying, in effect, that the Father's self-affirmation over against sinners (who as such deny his Fatherhood) can take shape as a self-alienation perfectly bespeaking the omnipotent weakness of absolute love--the omnipotence and absoluteness of which is to be beheld in the mission of the Son who, in taking the "place" of sinners, is able to affirm his divine Sonship (the economic prolongation of his being generated) precisely through accepting the path of self-alienation.⁶⁰⁷

As we have already noted, although Balthasar makes the threefold connection between the Son's "*Gezeugtwerden*", "*Hinterlegung*" and "*Gottverlassenheit*", and in addition (as we have established in D.1. of this chapter) explicitly traces the crucified Son's forsakenness back to its ultimate ground in the Father's (generative) self-separation from the Son, he does not provide a proportionate explication of the forsaken Son's self-alienation as springing from the Father's (generative) self-separation from his Paternity. Nevertheless, Balthasar does make assertions which

⁶⁰⁷ With this assertion we have drawn out the wider (read: patrogenetic) implications of the following lines of Balthasar in *PI*, 399: "Da im Erreichen der äussersten Entfremdung Gott sich selbst als der Allmächtige erweisen hat, der auch in der Nichtidentität seine Identität, in der Verlorenheit sein Beisichsein, im Totsein sein Leben zu wahren vermag....[D]er Gang of Liebe 'bis ans Ende' (Jn 13:1) ist als solcher ihre Selbstverherrlichung." From the English translation (*SI*, 413): "By going all the way to the outermost alienation, God himself has proven to be the Almighty who also is able to safeguard his identity in nonidentity, his being-with himself in being lost, his life in being dead....[T]he way of love 'to the end' (Jn 13:1) is itself love's self-glorification."

can be taken up and utilized to this purpose; he offers sufficient indicators, if not a sufficient development in this case. Among these indicators--to supplement those presented at the commencement of our discussion--is Balthasar's statement that "Christ's ability to do this [to be "alienated from himself" on Good Friday⁶⁰⁸] is owing to his unique being and mandate. According to the Christian understanding, this uniqueness implies the mystery of the Trinity...the trinitarian difference between Father and Son."⁶⁰⁹ He goes on: "The perfect self-alienation is a function of the incarnate Christ's obedience, and this obedience is once more a function of his free love for the Father",⁶¹⁰ which in its turn (we may add) is a function of his being begotten by the Father as his Image. There is more yet. We have Balthasar's remark that in dying "the Logos found the adequate expression of his divine stance: letting himself remain available for the Father in everything, even in the ultimate alienation".⁶¹¹ Here again, what can this "everything" denote except the Son's being disposed of by the Father as the perfect reflection of his Being? Clearly we are justified in shifting the theological point of reference from the begotten Son to the begetting Father, and doing so enables us to discern that it is by virtue of the Father's act of sending the Son unto the estrangement of the Cross, in which respect the Father deprives himself of the Son's nearness with whom he has deposited his Fatherhood, that the Son *can* do likewise, i.e., can allow himself to be deprived of the Father's nearness with whom he has deposited his Sonship. It seems to us that Balthasar is affirming precisely this when he regards "the privation which the Father experiences" as the measure of love between the One who sends and the One who is sent,⁶¹² for the

⁶⁰⁸ See *SI*, 409.

⁶⁰⁹ *SI*, 410-11. Balthasar continues on p. 411 by defining the trinitarian difference in terms of "the Father's surrender of the Son and the Son's being surrendered in the unity of the trinitarian agreement". Here, however, Balthasar does not interpret the Father's surrender of the Son as entailing the surrender of his Paternity to and with the Son, although such a remark would render explicit the capacity for self-alienation in the Father himself.

⁶¹⁰ *SI*, 411.

⁶¹¹ *SI*, 412.

⁶¹² *TD IV*, 239: "Am Ermangeln, das der Vater während der Erdenzeit des Sohnes erfährt, ermisst er 'wie gross seine Liebe zum Sohn und die Liebe des Sohnes zu ihm ist'." Balthasar cites from A. von Speyr's *4 Jo*, 460.

fact that it is *the Father's* privation which has priority as the measure of divine love suggests its *generative* nature. Indeed the recognition that divine love can attest to itself in the form of (freely self-allowed) privation--a form whose source lies in God's self-disposing as Father--renders worthy of belief the New Testament proclamation that "*God's love* was revealed in our midst in this way: he sent his only Son...as an offering for our sins" (1Jn 4:9-10). In support of this interpretation we can point to Balthasar speaking elsewhere of "the reciprocal personal forsakenness of the Father and the Son",⁶¹³ since this reciprocity (in what concerns its every modality *ad intra* and *ad extra*) is engendered by the paternal origin of trinitarian Being. Surely, then, it is only insofar as we throw light on the generative efficacy of the Father's mode of absolute love--whether under the aspect of omnipotent powerlessness, or of the ability to leave his Paternity with the Other whom he leaves free--that we can follow Balthasar in understanding that the "high point" of the Son's revelatory interpretation of God the Father is as the Forsaken One. A passage we quoted in chapter II receives a deeper and more comprehensive illumination of this kind, now that we have exposed its roots in the immanent Trinity: more specifically, in view of the paternal "leaving-free" [*Freilassen*].

"This is what the Father is like."...The high point of Jesus' interpretation of God is the time...that the Son on the Cross is forsaken by the Father....Here, certainly, Jesus is the man who takes away the sin of the world, and God can only turn his face away from the monstrous proportions of this sin. But is this God who has turned his face away not also a forsaken God? "He who has seen me has seen the Father"--he who has seen my forsakenness has seen also the Father's forsakenness. So far does Jesus' transparency go, allowing the Father to shine through him...[that] what really baffles the Christian believer is...the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁶¹⁴

This brings us to the third tier of our discussion--that which concerns the relation between God as Father and finite freedom (since the Father, the unoriginated hypostatic mode of infinite

⁶¹³ "Es braucht die gegenseitige personale Verlassenheit von Vater und Sohn, woraus dann allein auch das Höchste an Offenbarung und somit der vollkommene Glaube entspringen wird", *TD* IV, 238.

freedom, is the *ex quo omnia*). It remains for us to make some reference to the Father's leaving-free (or letting-be) as engendering of a mirroring counter-movement in finite freedom. For the moment, let us leave to one side finite freedom's election to graced adoption by God the Father; let us regard it simply from the perspective of its state as created.⁶¹⁵ Even as such, the creative procession of finite freedom from God is embraced within the Son's generation.⁶¹⁶ On the basis of Balthasar's theodramatic exposition of the Trinity, we have already observed that finite freedom is rendered possible by the Father's leaving-free or letting-be the Son as a distinct hypostatic mode of divine autonomy.⁶¹⁷ Since it is in the "acting area" of the Son in relation to the generating Father that finite freedom comes into existence and moves toward its self-realization, the capacity of finite freedom to be an "image" of infinite freedom is to be found here. We can expect, therefore, formulations of the structure and situation of finite freedom to suggest the outline of the Son's (begotten) exercise of divine intellection and volition--always granting, of course, the infinite ontological distance between the absolute, consubstantial freedom which the Son receives from the Father and the finite freedom with which the creature is endowed by God.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁴ YCY, 103-104. Also *ibid.*, 33-34. On the role of the Holy Spirit in regard to the mutual forsakenness between the Father and the Son, see TD IV, 236-37.

⁶¹⁵ Of course, with Balthasar we must understand this "leaving to one side" as the subtractive process by which we arrive at the theological concept of nature or creatureliness as such. "The right approach for theological thinking...will move within the complex order of this world [constituted as a *de facto* unity of the two orders of nature and grace, with the ordination of the former to the one supernatural goal], which is the *only legitimate object* of theological thought. Living inside its vocation in grace, a grace that has *already* been poured out, theological thinking will step back reverently and acknowledge that this grace is totally undeserved....Nature is to be sought in that *minimum* that must be present in every possible situation where God wants to reveal himself to a creature. ...For nature, defined as creatureliness, 'ensures' that grace is 'only' grace and does not turn into nature, meaning a natural participation in God's nature." TKB, 284-85, 287. Emphasis Balthasar's. It follows that we will also be prescinding from the sin-conditioned state of nature.

⁶¹⁶ See TD 2, 258-70, 276-77, 286-87; and TD 4, 326. In support of this assertion, the theology of High Scholasticism can be cited once again. "The first procession", according to Thomas Aquinas, "is the cause and ground of all subsequent processions"; *I Sent.* prol. (Moos I 1-5). For additional citations, see ahead to Section E, on receptivity in God.

⁶¹⁷ See chapter III, section B.

⁶¹⁸ "The innermost nature of finite freedom is revealed in an exemplary concrete manner in the humanity of Christ"; TD 2, 237. Here we depend on our discussion in chapter II, section E, regarding the filial freedom of Jesus Christ, both infinite and finite. Of course, insofar as we are attempting throughout Part Two to elucidate against the backdrop of the immanent begetting the dramatic character of the relationship between God the Father and the human

“‘This day I have begotten you’, says the Father to the Son. This day I have created you, says eternal freedom to finite freedom.”⁶¹⁹ As a faculty of judgment (“of seeing and choosing”, deeming and disposing),⁶²⁰ finite freedom cannot fulfill itself without becoming aware of and responding appropriately to its situation in relation to its source. While Balthasar maintains that Thomas Aquinas was right to insist upon the possibility, given with human nature, of both a natural knowledge of God and a “natural love of God above all else”,⁶²¹ for his part Balthasar locates the situation in which finite freedom “originally” [*ursprünglich*] has access (by knowledge and love) to its absolute ground and goal within the context of the I-Thou relationship: specifically the paradigmatic relationship between the child and its mother.⁶²² The reflections that follow,

person in salvation history, our comments in the present context assume and build upon what has already been laid down in our previous sections.

⁶¹⁹ *TD* 2, 286. Lest we think that with the second sentence Balthasar simply shifts his perspective from God as Triune to God as One, as if directing us to consider the creative activity of eternal freedom in terms of an undifferentiated unity, it should be pointed out that immediately prior to the passage here quoted Balthasar states that in the Father’s act of begetting “eternal freedom eternally gives itself away and thus generates the Son”.

⁶²⁰ See *TD* 2, 276. Balthasar (in *TD* 2, 231-32) summarizes Augustine’s definition of finite freedom as “the rational, autonomous motion of the soul....This presupposes a free faculty of judgment (*liberum arbitrium*) in every freedom”. Among Augustine’s works see *PL* 35, 1609; and *PL* 45, 1495-96; also *De lib. arb.* 3, 1, 3; 32, 1272; and *ibid.*, 8; 1275. For Thomas Aquinas “the will’s free, autonomous motion always involves...insight into Being in its totality and the act of judging every existing thing and every value under the aspect of Being and of the good per se; so much so that the two elements can only be grasped in a reciprocal priority.” *TD* 2, 225. See Thomas’ *De veritate* q 22, a 13 c.; and q 24, a 1 c.

⁶²¹ On the possibility of a natural knowledge of God, see Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I, q. 2, a. 3; q. 12, a. 12; and q. 13, a. 10, ad. 5. On the possibility, given with human nature, of a “natural love of God above all else”, see *ibid.*, I/II, q. 109, a. 3. Balthasar’s comments on these points of Thomist doctrine are found in his essay “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 18-19, 28-31.

⁶²² We can only mention in passing the historical setting in which Balthasar’s treatment of “natural theology” is proffered; we do so, however, in order to throw light on the contribution he makes in attempting to include and interpret Thomas’ cosmological approach within the context of an underlying anthropological approach--more precisely still, an interpersonal approach. The setting to which we refer is that of modern man confronted with the challenge presented by systematic atheism. It is the claim of modern systematic atheism that the existence of God must be denied if the dignity and freedom of the human person are to be upheld (see *Gaudium et Spes*, #20). The crux of the issue concerns the proper understanding of both infinite divine freedom and finite human freedom, with modern atheism contending that these freedoms are mutually exclusive. Balthasar is among those who, like Kasper, propose that only a God who can establish man as his op-posite in a reciprocal relationship of self-giving (the condition for the possibility of which is a *trinitarian* God) can silence modern atheism’s contention. Now the “five ways” of St. Thomas, as ways leading to natural knowledge of God’s existence as the necessary ground of the world, make a valuable contribution to Christianity’s dialogue with atheism. But the notion of “God” to which they point sheds no direct light on the question of whether God can act “personally” vis-à-vis man. Indeed the “five ways” do not explicitly include the anthropological approach to God’s existence: arguing from the human spirit which, while remaining finite and contingent, transcends itself toward the infinite and absolute Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

accordingly, presuppose Balthasar's meta-anthropological approach to "natural theology"⁶²³--that is to say, his analysis of finite freedom's primordial experience of Being [*Seinserfahrung*] which is mediated through the child's being awakened to self-consciousness thanks to its being addressed [*Angerufensein*] by love, and which issues in an "original intuition" [*Ursprungsintuition*] bearing the implication that "Being and love are coextensive".⁶²⁴

However, even this latter version of the anthropological argument does not secure a notion of God as personal. For although the Absolute can be argued to exist as the last end toward which the human spirit tends, yet considered precisely as the Absolute what is attained is a philosophical idea of "God" antithetical to the notion of a personal Thou. In such a case, one can conceive (along with Hinduism and Buddhism, for example) that in order to attain to its ultimate end (the Absolute) the finite human spirit must be de-personalized because the non-personal Absolute can have no other relative to Itself. The question, then, which arises for the Christian in conversation with systematic atheism is this: whether it is possible to develop a doctrine of man's natural knowledge of God that not only includes the contributions of both the "five ways" and the anthropological approach, but also points to God--the absolute ground and goal of human existence in freedom--illuminated by the light of Being as a personal "Thou" who loves. Balthasar's proposal (see n. 680 and n. 690 below) allows the created spirit an "original" [*ursprünglich*] and "natural" access to God which issues in inklings of a "promise inscribed in nature" that its origin and end will graciously show itself to be a loving "Thou" who, with no diminishment of divinity, is capable of turning toward finite freedom and opening up to it the sphere of absolute love, thereby offering the definitive affirmation and consummation of human personhood and freedom. To be sure, the relative "ease" with which we articulate the contents of this "promise" is due to the answer already provided by the trinitarian God's self-revelation in salvation history. Without this self-revelation, the chasm between the mythical notion of God (as personal Thou) and the philosophical notion of God (as nonpersonal Absolute)--both of which poles (i.e., the Absolute Thou) are indicated in finite freedom's primordial experience--remains unbridgeable.

Moreover, the very question we asked above ("whether it is possible to develop a doctrine of man's natural knowledge of God that not only includes...") is equally pertinent to the project of a Christian "natural theology" in its own right. For we must keep in mind that the task of natural theology entails working backwards, as it were, from God in his self-revelation perceived in the full light of faith to a doctrine of man's natural knowledge of God which the former (knowledge by faith) presupposes. It is a premise of natural theology that the God of faith must also be a God accessible to reason; if this were not the case, the properly human element in the act of faith would be negated and we would find ourselves on a slippery slope towards atheism or pantheism. Now the God of faith is the God of the covenant, the God of Jesus Christ, the absolute "Thou" who out of love establishes a beloved from whom he calls forth a reciprocating love. On the basis of the economy of Jesus Christ, the supernatural end of finite freedom (and concomitantly "its inmost nature", *TD* 2, 237) is also disclosed in its definitive fullness. This brings us once again to the aforementioned question, one which Balthasar endeavors to answer in the affirmative. In so doing Balthasar aims to accomplish the following objectives: (1) to elucidate how grace alone can be considered as consummating (rather than nullifying) finite freedom and, consequently, (2) how divine freedom can be considered as a salvific answer to the dynamic orientation of human freedom--thus disarming atheism's "defense" of human freedom against God; and finally, (3) to provide a doctrine of a natural knowledge of God which is able to serve as a preamble to faith in the trinitarian God of Christianity.

⁶²³ Balthasar provides a retrospective explanation of his own approach in *My Work in Retrospect* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 111-9. For an introduction to Balthasar's meta-anthropological approach to the problem of the ontological difference, see Angelo Scola, *Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Theological Style* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995).

⁶²⁴ We have already incorporated elements of this analysis in our study: see the excursus in chapter II, section D.3, on the Parent-Child Model, and chapter III, section B. Nonetheless, the topic at hand warrants an extensive citation of the main lines of Balthasar's analysis as found in his "Bewegung zu Gott", *op. cit.* (p. 13): "The infant awakens to self-awareness through being addressed by the love of his mother....The comprehension of the mother's smiling and of her total giving of self is that which awakens the response of [filial] love to [parental] love. It is a response evoked by the mother--the response of the 'I' to the address of the 'Thou'. ...What comes to original

Concerning the situation of finite freedom, the first aspect to be distinguished is its given-ness [*Gegebensein*], or conversely, its owing-of-itself [*Selbst-verdankung*]. For upon awakening to the fact of his existence, unless the light of Being is significantly obscured, the human person experiences the reality of his being there [*Vorfindlichkeit*] and being free as a good gratuitously given.⁶²⁵ Now granted this awareness of the given-ness of his freedom, the human person is summoned to a fundamental acceptance of the gift: in a word, to a “*Freiheitsempfang*”. However, in order to accept his own existence-in-freedom the human person must deem the gift to be precious and hence acceptable, a judgment which he is enabled to make by virtue of its already being deemed precious by the creative source of the gift. Indeed it is because the human person “knows that he himself has been affirmed from some quarter: someone has bestowed on him the Yes of being” that he is moved to utter his own Yes to being given himself.⁶²⁶ Hence in light of this original experience of Being, the given-ness of finite freedom can be seen to convey an ontological meaning which, after the manner of an address, calls forth from the creature an

comprehension is that the ‘Thou’ of the mother is *not* the ‘I’ of the infant, but that the two centers move themselves in the same ellipse of love; and even more: that this love is the supreme good and absolutely satisfying, the *a priori* beyond which nothing higher can be expected. Consequently, it is in this relation of the ‘I’ to the ‘Thou’ that the plenitude of reality is fundamentally revealed. All that later will be able to be experienced as disappointment, deficiency, and nostalgic desire will only have a derived character by relation to it. This is precisely why everything--the ‘I’, the ‘Thou’, and the world--is illuminated from this lightning flash of the origin with a ray of light so clear and pure that it includes also a disclosure of God. In the beginning was the word with which a loving ‘Thou’ calls forth the ‘I’: in listening to it lies the ‘I’s’ being gifted with his response....(p. 14): [When parental] love calls in giving the power to respond, then the [filial] ‘I’ is touched at his heart, at the very core of his being...and this is why the infant discovers at the same time this truth: my ‘I’ is loved, it is worthy of love for the mother, and my response can consist in nothing other than the gift of this ‘I’--with all that belongs to it....(p. 15): But it is important already here, at the beginning of our reflections, to see that Christianity will be the only fully satisfying explication of what is implied in the first experience of Being on the part of the awakening spirit: Being and love are coextensive.” My translation.

Roughly fifteen years prior to his essay “*Bewegung zu Gott*”, Balthasar wrote the following: While “this first gift [i.e., creation]--which is completely free and ‘personal’ in its origin as an *act*--is accessible in its final outcome only in created nature, God’s personal self-disclosure as Creator is neither ‘reified’ nor even obscured. [Creation praises its Creator] by pointing in all its aspects, values, and deficiencies to God as the free ‘spiritual’ Creator.” *TKB*, 310.

⁶²⁵ See *TD* 2, 285-86, and 290.

⁶²⁶ *TD* 2, 286. Elsewhere Balthasar has emphasized the noetic side: “[T]he ‘inferential’ ascent of thought to the Creator is always borne by the Creator’s prior decision to reveal himself in this nature itself. Even the natural *cogito* (‘I think’) has a *cogitor* (‘I am being thought’) as its presupposition.” *TDK*, 310.

answering assent.⁶²⁷ More yet: the Yes which is evoked from finite freedom--the Yes whereby the free creature takes possession of himself--is fittingly characterized by gratitude [*Dankbarkeit*]. As such, that is, as a *grateful* assent, it is directed not only to the gift of freedom received but also to the Giver of freedom. And the free creature must direct its assent thus not only upon first awakening to the gift but as a continuous disposition in the exercise of its freedom.

The fact that [finite freedom] “must” give thanks for its very existence--and not for mere existence either, since the latter has been endowed with the ineffable gift of self-determination--does not render it unfree or servile vis-à-vis infinite freedom; rather, it is [its] appropriate expression. However, this imperative (it “must” give thanks) is a constant reminder that it owes its autonomy to infinite, freedom-bestowing freedom...and that it can only fulfill its own freedom in and through the divine freedom which thus--in bestowing freedom--manifests its presence.⁶²⁸

And inasmuch as the possessor of finite freedom subsequently recognizes that others, too, have been endowed with this gift, the imperative which imbues the given-ness of his own freedom summons him to extend his disposition of acceptance and affirmation along the horizontal plane of created nature, that is, in relation to the other free creatures whom he encounters.

What has been said so far leads us directly to consider another aspect of finite freedom’s situation, one which we already introduced in Section B of this chapter. There we spoke of the dramatic form of finite freedom vis-à-vis infinite freedom as entailing simultaneously a being determined (a “must”) and a self-determining; we could equally say, a being disposed of and a self-disposing. For while infinite freedom allows finite freedom to exist in itself [*In-sich-Sein*] and to exercise its own creaturely autonomy,⁶²⁹ nonetheless from the start finite freedom is governed by

⁶²⁷ “Auf der andern Seite liegt im Wort Frei-Gabe immer das Wort Gabe”; *TD* II/1, 284. The English translation given in *TD* 2, 312, omits the “Wort”-aspect contained in the original passage.

⁶²⁸ *TD* 2, 313. As Balthasar himself notes: “Here, of course, we are speaking of the concrete world order with which we are familiar, in which God created all things ‘in Christ’, that is, in his gracious plan of salvation. We know nothing of any other world, a world of ‘pure nature’. In the real world, therefore, finite being will always be able to experience its own gift-character, and in a particular and verbal form too. Whether this comes about through external or purely internal revelation (see Thomas, *De Ver.* 18, 3 c) is immaterial here.” *TD* 2, 312, n.1.

⁶²⁹ See *TD* 2, 312. (*TD* II/1, 284.)

“the eternal law imprinted within it” (Augustine)⁶³⁰--more precisely, by “the (trinitarian) ‘law’ of absolute freedom as self-surrender”.⁶³¹ At the present, our objective is to indicate in theodramatic terms how this eternal (trinitarian) law governs finite freedom without vitiating the latter’s self-determining. The following statement of Balthasar’s will guide our initial step: “Finite freedom, genuinely set free and equipped with its own sphere of freedom, cannot set off in just any direction but must pursue the path of self-realization, that is, toward absolute freedom. Its coming forth (*egressus*) from its origin is the beginning of its return (*regressus*) there.”⁶³² Let us note that the “must” which codetermines the realization of finite freedom is given with its creative procession and concerns the creature’s return-movement toward his absolute origin, which movement is the creature’s (obediential) exercise of the freedom received. From here it is not difficult to discern finite freedom to be a copy [*Abbild*] of the infinitely free Image [*Vorbild*], namely, the only-begotten Son whom the Father leaves-free to his distinct hypostatic mode of divine autonomy, albeit as codetermined by the Father’s generative disposal of the divinity as a self-giving-over without reserve; as we have seen, the Father’s unoriginate exercise of infinite freedom, by virtue of its identity with absolute Being, serves as a “necessary will” given with the Son’s eternal procession and in relation to which (in turning toward the Father, Jn 1:1) the Son’s exercise of divine autonomy is the perfect correspondence [*Entsprechung*] of Beloved to Lover.

Keeping before our minds the central theme of this section (D.2) our next step is to understand that the creature’s return-movement (*regressus*), that is, his exercise of finite freedom in accordance with the “must” which codetermines its fulfillment, is elicited by the disposition of the Giver of freedom made manifest in the gift. About this disposition, what can be said is derived first of all from implications of Balthasar’s analysis of the primordial awakening of the created spirit to

⁶³⁰ See Augustine’s *Lib. arb.*, I, 6, 15; cited by Balthasar in *TD* 2, 222.

⁶³¹ See *TD* 2, 259.

his being-as-”I” [*Ichsein*] in the interpersonal experience of the “Thou”. For in this event God is found as the human person’s “origin in love” [*als seinen Ursprung in der Liebe*], and hence as disposing of infinite freedom precisely thus in giving (finite) freedom to the creature. Consequently, granted that the created spirit tends to the knowledge and love of God as to its last end,⁶³³ for Balthasar the primary condition of this spiritual orientation remains an awareness of the disposition of absolute freedom as love.⁶³⁴ Viewed from the perspective of the primal Giver, this disposition can be elucidated (according to the trinitarian law governing finite freedom) in terms of the Father’s initiatory making room for the (creaturely) other’s exercise of autonomy. Beyond serving a purely academic purpose, such an elucidation (“seeing the form” of the Giver) can facilitate the creature’s movement toward self-realization. To be moved to accept the obligations of his situation as one given existence-in-freedom “the creature must learn something of eternal love”, he must learn “how to ‘see’ God”.⁶³⁵ Insofar as the creature recognizes that God’s establishing a “joint action” of infinite and finite freedom (the form which God’s bestowing of freedom takes), far from functioning as a showcase for God’s domination of the creature, is rather an “empowering” of him,⁶³⁶ or again, is a “liberation” of the creature by allowing room for his genuine self-disposing,⁶³⁷ the creature can the more easily consent and correspond to the truth “that

⁶³² *TD* 2, 290.

⁶³³ See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *SCG*, III, 25; *De ver.* q 5, a 5; in addition *S. Th.*, I/II, q.92, a.2; and q.109, a.3.

⁶³⁴ “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 18: “[B]ehind what is apparently the alien element in nature...stands ultimately an eternal Spirit that is related to his own [created] spirit; as spirit, he can only have an unmediated relationship to this Spirit....[The human being] has already found God as his origin in the love whose *anamnesis* [remembrance] is never completely obliterated, and which remains the secret or open horizon according to which the things of the world are to be measured. In this process, two things will happen: he will be able to arrange worldly realities into a certain ascending scale of approximation to the absolute measurement,...yet he will also know at the same time that no worldly reality as such can bring him to the point of absolute salvation, but rather that absolute love can turn toward him only on its own initiative and in freedom.” (I have slightly modified the English translation by Brian McNiel, C.R.V.) See in addition *TKB*, 310.

⁶³⁵ *TD* 2, 276.

⁶³⁶ Finite freedom “needs to have infinite freedom in and above itself, empowering it to realize itself as finite freedom”; *TD* 2, 200.

⁶³⁷ See *TD* 2, 273.

he owes his being to the profound abyss of freedom (God's love) which has given him this being-in-responsibility, *and* simultaneously [that he is summoned to] affirm and make room for the freedom of others (love of neighbor)".⁶³⁸ Otherwise expressed: the more finite freedom appreciates that it is handed over to itself as one genuinely let-be by the Giver of freedom, and that this disposition of infinite freedom in the giving is integral to the "law" which codetermines the gift, the more finite freedom will be enabled to dispose of itself in thanksgiving (its modality of letting-be in answer to the Giver) and in generous acceptance of its fellow creatures likewise endowed with freedom.

Now the foregoing means that the decision which the creature must make about itself can be characterized as the choice whether or not to dispose of its freedom as an affirmative response to, and hence as reflecting, the disposition of the Giver present in the gift.⁶³⁹ This means, in turn, that it is not enough for us to interpret the fulfillment of finite freedom simply in respect of its returning to the realm of infinite freedom as to its ultimate goal (albeit a realm which, because it is infinite

⁶³⁸ *TD* 4, 370. The full text reads: "Finite freedom...is the gift of 'beginning from oneself' (*autexousion*), yet it always contains the second dimension, namely, the obligation to leave room in the vast expanse of Being for an unimaginable number of others, equally free. Associated with the latter is the obligation to acknowledge one's indebtedness to the source of unconditional freedom, for finite freedom must return to this source in order to reach its goal (that is, its own total liberation, which can only be found in unconditional, infinite freedom)....[I]f it is to avoid self-contradiction, it cannot affirm itself as a loving source unless it acknowledges that it owes its being to the profound abyss of freedom (God's love), which has given it this being-in-responsibility, *and* simultaneously affirms and makes room for the freedom of others (love of neighbor)." Balthasar is here describing the structure of finite freedom in view of the situation in which it is placed, a situation wherein "natural" obligations to love are integral to its self-realization. The use to which we put this text, however, goes a step further by indicating that the self-disposing in love required of the creature presupposes and indeed is persuasively elicited through its knowing something of God's self-revelation in created freedom, i.e., something of the manner in which God as Creator exercises absolute freedom. Whether we consider the situation in abstraction from the concrete condition of finite freedom in salvation history, or whether we consider with Paul in Romans 1:18f. that finite freedom is being summoned and claimed within the ambit of its supernatural vocation, what matters here is that on the plane of nature finite freedom is "already" engaged in a movement toward self-fulfillment analogous to that described in 1Jn 4:7-12, being persuaded in its movement by virtue of God's self-disclosure as Creator. Conversely, the refusal to acknowledge God and his gift of freedom to other creatures "extends as far as knowledge of him does" (*TKB*, 321). In fine, it is our opinion that Balthasar allows for the possibility that included in the created spirit's "original intuition" of Being (within the context of its interpersonal experience of the loving "Thou") is the illumination of God's creative disposition of letting-be, an intuition susceptible to further reflection and conceptual refinement.

⁶³⁹ The possibility of a negative response was discussed above in the context of our remarks on the latency of infinite freedom in finite freedom. Here we need only reiterate that the creature can indeed refuse to acknowledge the disclosure of the Giver in the gift of freedom. See *TD* 2, 313-14.

and free, precludes finite freedom's laying claim to it).⁶⁴⁰ We must in addition, following Balthasar's direction, consider this very return-movement of finite freedom to involve its "seeing", its assenting to, and its mirroring the manner in which infinite freedom disposes itself (originally and originatively) as Father-Creator--a manner which, on the part of infinite freedom, is capable of evoking from the creature a response in the order of "natural" love of God and neighbor.

Here we cross the threshold to the topic of grace. What has been established in the pages above prepares us to interpret the *convergence* that Balthasar sees between "the creature's complete surrender to the divine will...and the same creature's being born, together with the Son, from the generative primal womb of the Father".⁶⁴¹ For the structure and the situation of human freedom are not at all abolished in the creature's being elevated to the new freedom and the new awareness of being born from God. Of course, neither is God's self-disposing as Father-Creator effaced in the act of begetting us as his children by adoption.⁶⁴² There is sufficient reason, then, to continue with our hermeneutical point of view and attempt to explain the aforementioned convergence in light of the generative efficacy of the Father's act of leaving-free. Let us note, however, that a more extensive synthetic development of the central notions under discussion is reserved for the excursus below: on the prospect of universal salvation.

We have already pointed out that Balthasar's meta-anthropological approach to "natural theology" allows the human spirit an "original" access to God through the mediation of its being addressed by the loving smile of a finite Thou. This primordial experience issues in inklings of a "promise inscribed in nature" that the creature's origin and end will graciously show itself to be a

⁶⁴⁰ *TD* 2, 313-14: "[Finite freedom] can only fulfill its own freedom in and through the divine freedom which thus--in bestowing freedom--manifests its presence. This becomes even clearer when the aspect of man's coming-from-God [*Von-her*] is complemented by his going-to-God [*Zu-hin*]. Finite freedom must transcend itself, but it cannot annex to itself the realm of the infinite. Calling to mind the ultimate goal of its self-realization, it will continually encounter the gift-character of the divine realm in a new and heightened way." See also *ibid.*, 292.

⁶⁴¹ *TD* 2, 315.

⁶⁴² *SI*, 433.

loving “Thou” who, with no diminishment of divinity, is capable of turning toward finite freedom and opening up to it the sphere of absolute love, thereby offering the definitive affirmation and consummation of human personhood and freedom.

Moreover, we have already uncovered the requirement for the possibility of human freedom’s consummation, namely, that the trinitarian Father initiate a genuine dialogue with human freedom by graciously condescending to address the creature as a “thou” in the eternal “Thou” (the Son).⁶⁴³ Thus addressed by God whose essence “coincides with his ‘being gift’ [*Gabesein*] and his ‘being love’ [*Liebesein*]”,⁶⁴⁴ finite freedom learns that its given-ness [*Gegebensein*] is upheld and affirmed in the mystery of the Trinity. Indeed only on this basis can the creature affirm and receive itself unreservedly, which means, furthermore, that its self-surrendering movement toward God can be an act of thanksgiving for the gift of authentic selfhood confirmed by God from and for eternity. This is why the creature’s act of worship that “celebrates its participation in Being does not need to shrink to a mere awareness of the distance between the finite and the infinite”; “worship is no longer threatened with dissolution as a result of the finite participant being swallowed up in the infinite”. In a word, the revelation of the triune God “preserves us from both (pantheistic) mysticism and (formalistic) ritualism”.⁶⁴⁵

But if creaturely freedom as such is not annulled by the ever greater gift of divine filiation, it must be that infinite freedom, in offering the gift, operates “in a latent manner which allows finite

⁶⁴³ *SI*, 432: “A new initiative by God should become apparent *in* the difference between the creatureliness of man and the I-Thou relation between God (as Father) and the human race (whose members are meant to become children of God)....This happens because in the eternal Son who has become man in Jesus Christ, God has...given new birth to us ‘from himself’ (Jn 1:3).”

⁶⁴⁴ *TD* 2, 315.

⁶⁴⁵ *TD* 2, 287-8. Balthasar continues: “The creature’s metaphysical and theological locus is the diastasis of the divine ‘Persons’ in the unity of nature. Here the real difference between the creature and God no longer needs to occasion any anxiety in the former, because ultimately it is grounded in the real difference between the divine hypostases....[It is the revelation of the triune God which] keeps the world from two misinterpretations: namely, either assuming its existence to be a brute fact devoid of value;...or regarding its existence as an equally valueless nonfact since, it is alleged, outside the Absolute nothing can really be given, imparted, and entrusted to man.”

freedom to realize itself as genuine decision” for or against its being begotten by God.⁶⁴⁶ The fact that finite freedom is allowed to choose whether or not to let God father it by grace raises the question anew: how is the generation of the Son by the Father related to God’s offer of bringing the creature to new birth in Christ (which by the Father’s ordination is the ultimate end of human freedom)? “Within the Trinity,” says Balthasar,

God’s all-powerful love is also powerlessness, not only giving the Son an equal, divine freedom but also giving the creature itself--the image of God--a genuine power of freedom and taking it utterly seriously....[For] God does not overwhelm man; [on the contrary,] he leads him to his goals. This indicates no inability on God’s part....It arises from the power-lessness that, as we have seen [with respect to the Father’s leaving-free the Son], is identical with his omnipotence.⁶⁴⁷

The powerlessness of which Balthasar speaks concerns God’s delivering-over his Fatherhood (as the “Father of grace”) to the free creature’s judgment. While it is true that the latency which conditions the divine offer allows the creature to harden his heart against the Father’s advances,⁶⁴⁸ nonetheless the power to persuade the creature to assent to the Father’s love arises, as Balthasar maintains, from this very disposition of divine powerlessness.

Indeed, the generative efficacy of God’s “weakness” in bestowing grace is evidenced in that the creature’s assent takes the form of a filial (begotten) imaging of the self-surrendering Father. We note that, on its side, finite freedom’s assent bespeaks a disposition of availability and readiness to accord to God all the “space” that the Father claims for his love. Since “the act of making space can itself be seen as love *for the Father*,”⁶⁴⁹ it attests to its being engendered by the Father’s initiatory love which always already makes space for creaturely freedom and makes itself available as the creature’s origin and end. So too the “nonresistance” that characterizes finite freedom’s

⁶⁴⁶ *TD* 2, 316.

⁶⁴⁷ *TD* 4, 330-1.

⁶⁴⁸ See *TD* 2, 314 and 316.

⁶⁴⁹ *GL* 7, 291. Although in this statement Balthasar is referring explicitly to the singular relation of the incarnate Son to the Father, nevertheless it can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to creatures called to filiation in Christ.

surrender points back to, in virtue of its being called forth by, the “defenselessness” integral to the love proffered by the almighty Father. Thus, to see finite freedom allowing the Father to dispose of it in conformation “to the image of hisSon” (Rom 8:29) is to see therein the enabling and evocative power of the Primal Lover who allows himself to be disposed of--accepted or rejected--by the freedom he himself has given. This is why Balthasar can assert that human freedom’s return-movement toward God “would also signify the making-present (the embodying) of God in the world”.⁶⁵⁰

So far we have been concerned with providing an outline of the relation of God as Father to finite, human freedom as a formal presupposition to the theo-dramatic action of salvation history. Although space does not permit an extensive examination of the material conditions in which this action unfolds, we will offer a few remarks on the covenant(s) of biblical history as it pertains to our current theme--just enough to confirm the basic ideas presented above.

In the concluding (sixth and seventh) volumes of his *Theological Aesthetics* which are intended to offer an “approach-road” to a theology of both the Old and the New Covenant, Balthasar deals with human freedom from the standpoint of its encounter with God’s glory (*doxa*). This encounter, and the resultant “freedom to respond by thus reflecting God’s glory”, are treated by Balthasar “only in terms of the gift of grace”.⁶⁵¹

Insofar as “God’s glory, integrated in the grace of the covenant, exists for Israel...[so] Israel itself is integrated in its own answer” which denotes its giving back to God his glory. “The response ‘I will’ resounds through all its songs of praise,”⁶⁵² professing Israel’s decision to glorify Yahweh through a life of filial obedience. With this we arrive at the heart of Israel’s vocational

⁶⁵⁰ TD 2, 315.

⁶⁵¹ TD 2, 21.

⁶⁵² GL 6, 204. Emphasis mine.

identity: “by giving back his glory to God, [Israel] fulfills itself *as God’s image*, and also understands why it is not permitted to make for itself any carved image of God”.⁶⁵³

Set up precisely “as something which is to know God, respond to him in freedom, and welcome him with love”,⁶⁵⁴ the creaturely partner cannot realize itself by its own power. The capacity of perceiving God’s glory and of responding to it must be conferred on the covenant partner in virtue of a premier gift of grace: the Father’s antecedent offer of love.⁶⁵⁵ (“It was for love of you” (Dt 7:8), in paternal benevolence (Ex 4:22-23), because he loved your fathers and chose their descendents after them, [that] he brought you out from Egypt, openly showing his presence and his great power” (Dt 4:37).) Thus, the covenant “is two-sided *because* it is based on the one-sidedness of the love of God that makes the election”.⁶⁵⁶

Balthasar sees in the biblical motif of the wilderness “the essence of the covenant, stripped of all accretions”.⁶⁵⁷ The wilderness is that place to which the partner is led in consequence of Yahweh’s election. Viewed from the side of the covenant partner, being in the wilderness means being situated in “terrible proximity” to the God who has drawn near. This nearness to God brings with it “an inescapable exposure to the absoluteness of grace, and thus to the requirement of God”.⁶⁵⁸ In this respect, the wilderness signifies “the dreadful and glorious state of being handed

⁶⁵³ GL 6, 211. Emphasis mine. According to the tradition of P, God created man “as a ‘fashioned image’ (*selem*)...[who is] meant to stand in a relationship of ‘similarity to’ (*demuth*) God himself (Gen 1:26)....[I]n antiquity, an image commonly denoted the making present of a thing portrayed....[Hence] the meaning of the text is saying that man is put in the world as a representative of God and of God’s power as ruler. But this implies a special relationship of man to God....’This relationship is man’s ontological calling to divine sonship, which is never lost, not even through original sin, because it is founded upon God’s will and therefore in creation itself.” GL 6, 89-91; interior quote is from T. C. Vriezen, *Theologie des Alten Testaments in Grundzügen* (1956), 177.

⁶⁵⁴ GL 6, 87.

⁶⁵⁵ “God the Father [is] the Creator and the Founder of the Covenant”; MP, 209.

⁶⁵⁶ GL 6, 156. Emphasis mine. Similarly, “God’s holiness is active; it imposes itself and has an effect. ...Correspondingly, Israel’s obedience must also be active;...it will let him be LORD, thereby ‘glorifying’ him...by making room for grace”; GL 6, 63-4.

⁶⁵⁷ GL 7, 73.

⁶⁵⁸ GL 7, 70.

over to God”.⁶⁵⁹ Viewed from God’s side, the covenant partner is *enabled* to hand himself over in obedient faith, as one “who wagers absolutely everything on the God whose covenant he enters, *because* God has laid himself bare to him, even to the depths of his heart, and has made known to him, in his loving election of him, the incomprehensible weakness of his condition as one bound to men”.⁶⁶⁰ The paradox of the generative efficacy of God’s antecedent offer of love comes to light where the Fatherhood of God proves its absolute power in the form of equally absolute powerlessness. Considering that God surrenders the historical glorification of his divine Fatherhood to his servant’s deeming and disposing, it is God as Father who originally “wagers absolutely everything”. Given this perspective, we can penetrate to the innermost (theocentric-trinitarian) reason as to why the self-expropriation to which the chosen servant is called is a necessary condition of its reflecting the glory of God’s Fatherhood.

All of this points us back again to that “terrible proximity” which mutually conditions the covenantal intimacy: how “terrible” for the partner to live “an inescapable exposure to the absoluteness of grace, and thus to the requirement of [the glory of] God”;⁶⁶¹ yet how “terrible” that God first exposes his glory as Father (“lays himself bare” to the depths of his paternal love) in a total self-commitment that wagers all on the life-testimonial of the one elected to be his revelatory image. The wilderness is, after all, the place where the chosen one is put to the test.

For this reason it is possible for the partner to be tempted to make trial of the extent of his power over this loving weakness of God....This must be the penultimate temptation of the one who is essentially the chosen servant and son, who *de jure* has all power over the Father’s heart.⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁹ GL 7, 45.

⁶⁶⁰ GL 7, 73. Emphasis mine. Elsewhere Balthasar describes the Old Covenant as “a religion in which the evidence of the God who bears witness to himself in word and historical deed is closely bound to the intimate experience of the believer’s heart, pliant to the word and always reciprocating it”; GL 6, 71.

⁶⁶¹ GL 7, 70.

⁶⁶² GL 7, 73.

The test is one of seeing or not-seeing, of choosing or rejecting, and consequently, of imaging or distorting the authentic form in which God exercises his paternal lordship and authority—a form that, from the beginning, manifests itself as a disposition of unlimited solicitude and generosity toward all that God as Father-Creator brings into being. “God said, ‘See, I give you all....To all...I give every’...” (Gen 1:29-30). The end for which the partner is chosen makes unavoidable a decision regarding this form: will the covenant partner see and allow himself to stake his existence on the power of self-giving love, or will he (prefer to) confuse the power of dominion with the urge to dominate and grasp possessively?⁶⁶³ “Sin” in the biblical sense, then, understood as the conscious denial of God’s lordship *as God himself has revealed it*, bears a weight that goes beyond the self-ruination of the creaturely image,⁶⁶⁴ for sin opposes “God’s self-sanctification and self-glorification in the world”.⁶⁶⁵

Indeed, insofar as God surrenders his paternal activity to the covenant partner’s judgment, it appears that God’s self-glorification as Father is “at risk” in the (*ad extra*) covenantal order. The message of the New Testament is precisely that “such a feat of daring on God’s part is possible only because in God himself there exists an eternal reciprocity of living love”⁶⁶⁶ between the Father as Begetter and the Son as Begotten which, by transposing itself economically, secures the terrible

⁶⁶³ TD 2, 260: “Recognizing or failing to recognize this relationship [between God’s sovereign lordship and our vocational function as his servant-representative] will constitute the core of the action in theo-drama.”

⁶⁶⁴ Sin “reveals that abyss in the creature whereby it contradicts its own character as analogy and image, a character that arises necessarily from its position within the trinitarian relations”; TD 4, 328-9. N. Hoffmann, following Balthasar, defines sin against the backdrop of the Trinity: “The ‘good’ as whose opposite sin is *the* evil consists in the love in which God wants to be our Father in Christ. Sin—to the extent that it is qualified by the revelation of the New Testament—contradicts the inner trinitarian Fatherhood of God which is extended to the world in Jesus. It constitutes itself as evil in resistance against God, not merely inasmuch as he faces the world as creator, but inasmuch as he faces the Son as Father....The sinner refuses to be a creaturely place in which the inner trinitarian mystery occurs. Since he does not want to be son of the Father in the Son, he intends (in the *oikonomia* rooted in the Trinity) the separation of Father and Son. Hoffmann, “Christ and the world’s evil”, *Communio* 17 (Spring, 1990), 50-67; here 58-59.

⁶⁶⁵ GL 6, 64: “[I]t is by making room for grace that man obediently contributes to God’s self-sanctification and self-glorification in the world.” In addition, see *ibid.*, 16; and Num 27:14; Dt 32:51; Is 29:23.

⁶⁶⁶ GL 6, 87.

proximity “between God as the image-maker and the creature as itself the image”.⁶⁶⁷ All the obediential responses “that were attempted, bungled, abandoned when half-accomplished by Israel, [are now in the incarnate Son] endured, experienced to the finish, and thereby brought to their accomplishment, in a unique act of assuming them and recapitulating them”.⁶⁶⁸

This leads to three points of consideration in summary. First, the entire process of revelation has as its goal to make image and glory coincide in Jesus Christ, in whom the filial interpretive response is consubstantially one with the paternal address. “We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). Second, because the glory of God attains its definitive form in Christ’s death, descent into hell, and resurrection, we learn that God’s self-glorification in history is not brought to a halt before sin. Third, since it is as the Crucified and Risen One that the incarnate Son depicts the glory of the Father’s eternal love, what appears as the *doxa*--the divinity--of God is an omnipotence that shines forth from complete impotence.⁶⁶⁹ Here in the Christ event we gain “the only valid picture of what God is in himself: the One who conquers by total self-surrender”.⁶⁷⁰ And finally, insofar as the Father’s antecedent offer of love is one with the giving over of his Son (before the foundation of the world), the definitive test to which the creaturely partner is put entails its being confronted in some way with the Crucified. Dare we hope that God’s self-revelation in his Son, Crucified and Risen, will effectively elicit from every human being a collaborative self-surrender to being begotten as

⁶⁶⁷ *GL* 6, 102-3. Consider, too, that the revelatory I-Thou dialogue to be perfected by the partner’s fidelity and obedience to the covenant “is entirely shaped by God’s grace [and thus] it is formally a trinitarian revelation, even before the Trinity is materially revealed in the New Covenant”; *GL* 6, 208.

⁶⁶⁸ *GL* 7, 70. The prelude to this accomplishment is, of course, the episode of Jesus’ being tested in the wilderness where he shoulders Israel’s vocational situation before God.

⁶⁶⁹ See *GL* 6, 242-4. Regarding this event, “there is no hiatus between the powerlessness of being slain and the power of conquest--the latter comes by virtue of the former”; *TD* 2, 180.

⁶⁷⁰ *TD* 2, 180.

beloved children who image and thereby glorify their God and Father (1 Jn 4: 7-12)?⁶⁷¹ We shall return to address this question in our final excursus.

E. *The paternal receptivity*

Before considering the sense in which Balthasar understands “receptivity” as belonging to the Fatherhood of God, it will be helpful to identify in what respects this notion has been found both objectionable and acceptable in discourse about God within the Christian theological tradition.

Receptivity cannot be attributed to God when the perspective adopted, in the first place, limits its horizon to the difference between God and creature, and in the second place, regards God in terms of an undifferentiated essence without reference to the trinitarian processions. From this vantage point, the description of God as *actus purus* stands in contradistinction to receptivity understood as a passive potency proper to the creature. The receptivity at issue here--namely, the receiving of being--denotes the imperfection of creatureliness as such in radical otherness from God who is self-subsistent being.⁶⁷² Closely related to this line of reasoning is the rejection of a real relation of God to the world, the rejection of which intends to uphold the fundamental truth that the divine being is not constituted by relation to creatures, whereas creatures are constituted by relation to God who is the (freely creative) origin of creaturely being.

⁶⁷¹ But what of those who, during their lifetime, are not confronted explicitly with the good news of Jesus Christ, Son of God (Mk 1:1)? R. Kereszty reminds us of Balthasar’s insight “that the universally available human experience of a true ‘I’ and ‘thou’ encounter presupposes the universal presence of God’s grace and that its truth points beyond any philosophy to an explanation available only within Christian revelation....The practice of neighborly love, the only criterion of judgment according to Mt 25, has been available to all peoples of all times...Thus the way to salvation for these people may have been entirely ‘secular’ [i.e., the ‘I’-‘thou’ relationship understood as an anonymous experience of grace], mediated through one’s brother, who through the Incarnation has become the brother of the Son of God.” R. Kereszty, “Response to Professor Scola (on Nature and Grace in Hans Urs von Balthasar)” in *Communio* 18 (Summer, 1991), 235-6. We have already remarked (throughout this chapter as well as in the excursus within chapter II) on the generative efficacy proper to the initiatory love of the “I” who calls and integral to which is its relationally distinct mode of self-surrender, *disponibilité*, “weakness”, and so forth.

⁶⁷² See Balthasar’s remarks in *TD IV*, 74. In our discussion of the Father’s way of being divinely receptive, we are particularly indebted to G.F. O’Hanlon. See *op. cit.*, 121.

When, however, the perspective adopted is expanded to view the divine being precisely insofar as it is constituted by the trinitarian processions, it becomes possible, argues Balthasar, to ascribe to the triune God something at least analogous to passive potency. In support of this, the theology of High Scholasticism can be cited. According to Bonaventure, “there is a passive generative potentiality [*passive Zeugungspotenz*] in the Son as the aptitude for being begotten [*Gezeugtwerden*]”.⁶⁷³ Indeed, the theological tradition has consistently understood the Son and the Holy Spirit as receiving the divine being.⁶⁷⁴ Thus it can define divine Sonship in terms of a passive procession: the relation of the one generated to the generating principle.⁶⁷⁵ The passivity or receptivity that marks the relation of the begotten Son to the begetting Father permits Thomas Aquinas to explain that the birth of the Son from the Father “is the foundation of every birth out of what is other than itself, for it alone, completely naturally, seizes the entire nature of the One-who-generates; other births only do this in an imperfect manner....All subsequent births, consequently, are deduced from this primal birth by way of a certain imitation”.⁶⁷⁶ Elsewhere Thomas asserts that the processions within the Godhead and the creative processions are “not only to be viewed together: they are actually one. The fact that we call them ‘analogous’ arises from the direction of the act”.⁶⁷⁷ Bonaventure, for his part, says that “God could not have brought forth the creation on the basis of his will if he had not already brought forth the Son on the basis of his nature”.⁶⁷⁸

Far from undermining the basic theological concern given expression by the rejection of a real relation between God and creatures, these statements clearly maintain the distinction between

⁶⁷³ Bonaventure, I, d. 7, dub. 7 (*Quar.* I 145f); quoted by Balthasar in *TD* IV, 75.

⁶⁷⁴ While we can say that the Son receives the divine nature from the Father, this cannot be understood to mean that the Second Person possesses and exercises a received nature (which would be *ex nihilo*, other than the divine nature of the Father), but that he possesses the one divine nature as received/originated from the Father, or that the one divine nature subsists in the Son’s mode of being divine as receptive/active.

⁶⁷⁵ See Bonaventure, *ibid.*, d. 15, q. 3 (I 262f).

⁶⁷⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Boeth. de Trin.* Prol. (Opusc. theol. II, Marietti 314).

⁶⁷⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *De Pot.*, q. 2, a. 6, ad. 3.

the *ad extra* activity of the trinitarian Godhead (which is sovereignly free and gracious in its direction toward what is not-God) and the *ad intra* activity of the trinitarian Godhead (which of its nature is necessary and absolute in constituting what God is and which nevertheless is identical with absolute self-possession and self-disposing). Regarded from the side of that which is brought forth (that is, of a passive procession), it need be equally stressed that the “not out of itself” which characterizes creaturely being is by no means identical with the Son’s mode of divine being which, while “not out of itself” with respect to its originating from the Father’s generative act, is nonetheless constitutive of the inner-trinitarian life and hence is identical with *actus purus* “out of itself”. Still, for Balthasar, the Son’s passive generative potentiality as the aptitude for being begotten is “the deepest reason why the creaturely ‘not’ does not cause the analogy of being between creature and God to break down”.⁶⁷⁹

It is the incarnation of the Son of God, of course, that unveils the latter perspective. Balthasar more than once designates the incarnate Son as “the concrete *analogia entis*”,⁶⁸⁰ since “in the Person of the incarnate Son, his being-begotten [*Gezeugtsein*] and his being-created [*Geschaffensein*] form a unity”.⁶⁸¹ But lest we mistake the Son’s being-created as simply identical with our own, Balthasar reminds us that the Son’s “emptying himself” of “the form of God” to assume the form of a servant is itself already an act of correspondence to the eternal Father (see Phil 2:6-11). In infinite dissimilarity to our “being-thrown” [*Geworfensein*] passively into the world, the Son’s being-created is one with his being-sent [*Gesendetsein*] such that an act of filial self-giving [*Selbst-Weggabe*] lies at the interior of his coming forth from the Father to become

⁶⁷⁸ Bonaventure, I, d. 7, dub. 2 (*Quar.* I 144b). For Balthasar’s discussion of the relation between the Trinity and creation as taught by High Scholasticism, see *TD* IV, 53-57.

⁶⁷⁹ *TD* 2, 266.

⁶⁸⁰ See *Theologie der Geschichte*, 4th ed. (1959), 59f.; and *TD* 2, 267.

⁶⁸¹ *TD* IV, 70; Balthasar is citing from A. von Speyr, *Die Schöpfung*, 11.

man.⁶⁸² Accordingly, the Son's being-created as the one being-sent discloses his receptively active mode of infinite freedom vis-à-vis the sending Father.⁶⁸³

We have already traced (in chapter II of our study) how Balthasar extrapolates from the obediential form of the incarnate Son's self-giving to the inner-divine condition for its possibility in the eternal Son's mode of being. "Insofar as he is God, he is eternal, infinite freedom; insofar as he is the Son of the Father, he is this freedom in the mode (*'tropos'*) of readiness, receptivity, obedience, and hence of appropriate response; that is, he is the Father's Word, image and expression."⁶⁸⁴ With this remark (just one among many) we see Balthasar going beyond the interpretation traditionally given to the notion of receiving in God attributed to the Son, e.g., as the term of the Father's act of intellection the Son can be said to receive the divine substance. Supported by a Scriptural basis (this cannot be overly stressed), Balthasar has incorporated the contribution of contemporary thought in its concern for a dialogical "metaphysic of love" which grants the person a certain primacy over substance. Consequently, Balthasar can understand the Son's receiving Godhead, and hence infinite freedom, as constituting a personally active reception.

But if ascribing receptivity to the divine Son in respect of his being-begotten by the Father has been acceptable in the Christian theological tradition (for both classical and contemporary

⁶⁸² See *TD* IV, 297.

⁶⁸³ But lest we, on the other hand, lose sight of the similarity despite the infinitely greater difference between free creatures and the divine Son (he who, in respect to his being-created, is receptively active in self-disposing), David L. Schindler suggests we consider that "what the creature first 'does' is receive its be-ing: what it first 'does' is 'be'....[T]he creature's '*agere*' (or 'second act') thus consists most properly in freely taking over and recapitulating the receptive feature that is always already inscribed in its *esse* (or 'first act')....[R]eceptivity, already inscribed in the creature's *esse*, must thereby be recapitulated in--must give inner shape to--all of the creature's 'secondary' acts." David L. Schindler, "Catholic theology, gender, and the future of Western civilization", *Communio* 20 (Summer, 1993), 220. Henceforth, "Gender." See the subsequent articles which debate Schindler's suggestion that receptivity is already inscribed in creaturely *esse*: Steven A. Long, "Divine and creaturely 'receptivity': the search for a middle term", *Communio* 21 (Spring, 1994), 151-161; George Blair, "On *esse* and relation", *ibid.*, 162-164; Norris Clarke, "Response to Long's comments", *ibid.*, 165-169; Norris Clarke, "Response to Blair's comments", *ibid.*, 170-171; and D. L. Schindler, "The person: philosophy, theology, and receptivity", *ibid.*, 172-189. See also N. Clarke, "Person, Being, and St. Thomas", *Communio* 19 (Winter, 1992), 601-618; and Schindler, "Norris Clarke on Person, Being, and St. Thomas", *Communio* 20 (Fall, 1993), 580-92.

⁶⁸⁴ *TD* 2, 267.

approaches), nevertheless a notion of receptivity as being-from another cannot be univocally applied to God the Father who is the originless principle of the trinitarian Godhead. For the Father alone does not proceed from the hypostatic activity of another. Such is the central assertion of Thomas in the following: “[T]he Father receives nothing from another, while the Son receives his nature, if I may speak in this way, from the Father through eternal generation. Thus the Father, who gives, is greater, and yet the Son is not less, but equal, because he receives everything the Father has.”⁶⁸⁵

The pertinent questions then become: First, in what sense does Balthasar speak of receptivity with respect to the Father? (Not surprisingly, Balthasar does not provide a succinct, comprehensive definition of the term receptivity as applied to God the Father. We can only glean the meaning of the term and its implications from the contexts in which it is found throughout his work.) And second, what allows for the introduction of this usage into theological discourse? The answer to the second question has already been indicated in connection with the Son’s receptively active mode of divine being. Balthasar moves from a substance-based metaphysical approach to the tract *De Deo Uno* to a consideration of the triune God as disclosed in the economy of Jesus Christ which prompts him to concentrate more on the intrinsically inter-personal nature of trinitarian love and hence to employ “a scripturally-inspired trinitarian ontology of love”. Here we quote G. F. O’Hanlon: “In such an ontology one uses the analogy of human love and applies it hypothetically to God, making adjustments to cater for the ontological difference between God and us, so that it is possible at least to hint at the way in which various modalities of human love could exist analogously in God as perfections, and not as deficiencies.”⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Joannem*, n. 1971, p. 370, commenting on Jn 14:28. The text is cited by M. Waldstein in his article, “von Balthasar’s The Glory of the Lord”, *Communio* 14, Spring 1987, 28-29.

⁶⁸⁶ G.F. O’Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 169; see 80. See also Balthasar, *TD* IV, 57-58.

Given that Balthasar approaches the mystery of the trinitarian God via an ontology of interpersonal love, receptivity enters his purview as a perfection integral to the dialogical exchange between the Father and the Son in the common Spirit of infinite freedom. Within this interpretive framework, it no longer suffices to restrict receptivity to the Son and the Spirit as had been the case in the classical conceptions of the immanent processions proposed by both Eastern and Western theology, with the East tending to understand the processions according to a “straight-line” model and likewise the West albeit according to a monological model.⁶⁸⁷ Such a restriction would preclude an understanding of the triune God starting from the Father’s mode of divinity as self-disposing in love which focuses on mutuality already in its generative activity.⁶⁸⁸ Insofar as we fail to affirm the latter, says Balthasar, our conceptual approach

eviscerates the joys of expectation, of hope and fulfillment, the joys of giving and receiving and the even deeper joys of finding oneself in the other and of being constantly over-fulfilled by him; and finally--since we are speaking of God--it destroys the possibility of mutual acknowledgment and adoration in the Godhead. ...All this...implies that the hypostases do not possess the divine nature in common like an untouchable treasure; rather, the divine nature is defined through and through by the modes of divine being (*tropos tes hyparxeos*). This nature is always both what is possessed and what is given away, and we cannot say that a particular hypostasis is rich in possessing but poor in giving away for the fullness of blessedness lies in both giving and receiving both the gift and the giver.⁶⁸⁹

D. L. Schindler is among those who have argued in support of the view that receptivity is a divine perfection. Paraphrasing Balthasar, Schindler has stated: “receptivity is a perfection, because it is necessary for a complete concept of love. Love consists not only in giving, but also in receiving and turning back.”⁶⁹⁰ G. F. O’Hanlon is another who has noted that, “since the giving of the Father is incomplete unless received by the Son, receptivity is part of the active giving of the

⁶⁸⁷ A presentation of these two models can be found in W. Kasper, *GJC*, 296; and T. de Régnon, *op. cit.*, 335-40, 428-35.

⁶⁸⁸ See *WEL*, 16.

⁶⁸⁹ *TD* 2, 257-58. The inner citation is from G. Siewerth, *Der Thomismus als Identitätssystem*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Schulte-Bulmke, 1961), 104.

⁶⁹⁰ David L. Schindler, “Gender”, 204.

Father”.⁶⁹¹ Similarly, N. Hoffmann has observed that “the Father cannot possibly be himself without this corresponding property [viz., ‘receptive indebtedness’] on the part of the Son”.⁶⁹² What has been overlooked in their respective treatments, however, is the recognition that receptivity is a perfection of divine *Paternity*, because it is necessary for a complete concept of *generative love*. That is to say, what remains to be done is to develop the notion of a properly paternal receptivity in terms of its inherently generative efficacy. In the present study, we have already laid the foundations for this development in our examination of the economic relationship between the Father and the Son (see chapter II, E.3); here we will formulate “from above” what the mission of the Son presupposes about God “in himself”.

Precisely in engendering filial activity (see Jn 14:9-11), divine paternal activity entails a receptivity that is inherently generative. For the generative *fiat*, “Let there be” an absolute Thou with whom the Father establishes a relationship of mutual love, must itself be receptive to the distinct self-disposing of this Thou.⁶⁹³ We might put it this way: the Father’s self-giving as Primal Lover is one with his utterance of the Son as Beloved--an utterance that bespeaks the Father’s absolute openness to the response of the Thou. Such an utterance calls forth from the Beloved a (filial) self-giving as one who loves in imaging of the Father-Lover because he knows that the Father always already receives him.⁶⁹⁴ The Father’s self-giving, then, is constituted as a personal mode of activity/receptivity or active (initiator) receptivity that begets its counterpart hypostatic mode of self-giving as receptivity/activity or receptive (answering) activity which is the Son.

Consequently, it is not enough simply to maintain that the relationship of mutual love which proceeds from the self-giving of the Primal Lover requires *on the part of the Beloved* a mode of

⁶⁹¹ G.F. O’Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 121.

⁶⁹² Norbert Hoffmann, “Trinity and the Cross”, 258-59.

freedom as “receptive letting-be” [*empfangend Geschehenlassen*]. Balthasar himself is not entirely free from the inclination to confine his attention to this legitimate but limited perspective. At times when discussing the immanent life of the Godhead, he makes assertions that bear the potential for an explication of the Father as the generative archetype of trinitarian love who is perfectly reflected in (as answered by) the Son, only to follow them immediately with explanatory statements that depict the complementarity between the modalities of paternal and filial love in terms of a mutual exclusivity. Balthasar points out, for instance, that “within the trinitarian event a form of passivity of one Person stands opposed to the activity of another Person. The Father’s generating has its necessary counterpart in the being generated of the Son.”⁶⁹⁵ Similarly, he credits Clemens Kaliba for showing particularly well this implication of the passive *actio* in the active *actio* “In what concerns the notion of absolute love, the receiving and letting-be are as essential as the giving. In fact, without this receptive letting-be and all it involves--gratitude for the gift of oneself and the turning back in love toward the Giver--the giving itself is impossible.”⁶⁹⁶ In both cases we must go further, as Balthasar himself does subsequently, and explicitly affirm a form of passivity (we could equally say receptivity) proper to the Father that stands opposed to the Son’s self-disposing activity,⁶⁹⁷ so that where the notion of absolute love is concerned, there is a giving that is

⁶⁹³ For since what the Father “does” is the Son (TD2, 267), and since the Son is identical with his distinct self-disposing vis-à-vis the Father (TD 2, 256; TD 3, 168-69, 187, 225, 458, 533), then the Father must be (generatively) receptive to the Son if he is not to negate his work as Father.

⁶⁹⁴ See Mk 1:11; 11:24; Lk 23:46; Jn 11:42; 17:24; 3:35; and 1Jn 5:14-15.

⁶⁹⁵ My translation of TD IV, pp. 74-75: “...dass innerhalb des trinitarischen Geschehens eine Form von Passivität einer Person der Aktivität einer andern Person gegenübergestellt wird. Das Zeugen des Vaters hat sein notwendiges Gegenstück im Gezeugtwerden des Sohnes.” (=TD 5, p. 85.) In an accompanying footnote Balthasar refers to Bonaventure, d 9 a un q 2 concl (I 183a).

⁶⁹⁶ I have slightly modified G. Harrison’s translation in TD 5, p. 86. The original text in TD IV, p. 75, reads: “Diese Implikation der passiven *actio* in der activen wurde oben von Kaliba bestens betont. Das Empfangen und Geschehenlassen ist für den Begriff der absoluten Liebe ebenso wesentlich wie das Geben, das ohne das empfangende Geschehenlassen--und alles, was in der Liebe dazu gehört: die Selbst-verdankung und Rückwendung zum Schenkenden--gar nicht zu geben vermöchte.”

⁶⁹⁷ “So, even in the Father’s ‘active *actio*’, there is a certain passivity, qualified by the ‘passive *actio*’ of the Son and Spirit,” TD 5, p. 87. And again: “There is even something (super-) feminine about the Father, since, as we have shown, in the action of begetting and breathing forth he allows himself to be determined by the Persons who thus proceed from him;

distinctive to the Son which would be impossible if not for the utterly unoriginated and wholly initiatory “receptive letting-be” on the part of the Father to the Son’s mode of absolute freedom in the very act of begetting him. At all costs we must avoid the mistake of regarding the Father’s modality of receptivity as though it were the result of the Son’s activity rather than as integral to the generative principle from which issues its answering image.

Furthermore, inasmuch as the Father is the alpha and the omega of the immanent begetting,⁶⁹⁸ we can consider the Father’s mode of activity/receptivity to be, at the same time, both *generative* and *consummative* of the Son. More specifically, we can understand the Father’s exercise of intellection and volition in generating, on the one hand, as originatively positing the Son as his Beloved Thou proceeding from him, and on the other hand, as consummatively deeming and glorifying the Son as his consubstantial image returning to him.⁶⁹⁹

The Father is not an empty void, not a nirvana, but...the Son’s origin, lovingly affirming him. In the Father there is nothing beyond this eternal Yes to the Son, nothing he keeps to himself and does not share with the Son; the Son dwells in the Father’s absolute, boundless self-surrender to him; he is the result of this self-surrender....His is the fathomless bliss of being begotten, loved and affirmed by the entire abyss and bottomless ground of Being.⁷⁰⁰

It would indeed be an error to regard the Father-Begetter as “an empty void, a nirvana”, not only with respect to the Son’s coming forth from the Father, but equally with respect to the Son’s returning to him. For the Son’s “fathomless bliss of being begotten, loved and affirmed”, precisely because it pertains to his being person, must comprehend his act of self-ecstatic love vis-à-vis the

however, this does not affect his primacy in the order of the Trinity,” *TD* 5, p. 91. Elsewhere Balthasar writes: “Nur innerhalb dieser Ordnung kann auch der Vater als der von Sohn und Geist Empfangende betrachtet werden”; *HCE*40.

⁶⁹⁸ Our reference to the Father as the alpha and the omega of the inner-divine begetting signifies something other than the principle and term of the first procession—which can only be the Father and the Son respectively. It signifies, rather, that the glorification of the Fatherhood of God is the *telos* of the divine Sonship: the latter’s end is its perfect representation of the Father. Moreover, it is meant to underscore the mutuality posited with the begetting, such that the begetting is “consummated” only with the Son’s correspondence in self-giving vis-à-vis the Father.

⁶⁹⁹ *TD* IV, 84: “Since God stands before God, one can say ‘that God renders glory to God’ [‘dass Gott Gott Ehre erweist’].” My translation. Balthasar is quoting A. von Speyr from her work *Kath. Briefe* vol. I, 319. In an accompanying footnote Balthasar refers to von Speyr’s *Philippe*, 20: “Die drei Personen in Gott leben in ihrem ewigen Himmel, jede zur Ehre und zum Lob der andern, in einer gegenseitigen Verherrlichung.”

begetting Father;⁷⁰¹ it must, that is, comprehend the interpersonal exchange between the Father and the Son such that the Son's answering self-surrender is received by the Father with joyful veneration, loving affirmation, and limitless glorification. Only as inclusive of the receptive modality of the Father's deeming and disposing of the Son's return is the Son's act-as-person in the I-Thou relation of the immanent begetting (in short, his divine filiation) consummated.

Looking briefly to the economic sending of the Son which is a function and expression of the eternal begetting, we find therein inscribed a divine must ("*dei*") that the Son give himself in love "to the end" of his mission as one returning to the Father (see Mk 8:31; Jn 13:1). We find, that is, a filial "*telos*" which involves a dependence on the Father's receptivity to and glorification of the Son's full economic self-disposing (see Lk 23:46; Jn 13:31-32; 12:23; 17:4-5). The Johannine perspective in an especial way sees the realization of the Son's mission as coinciding with the Father's consummative glorification of the Son (Jn 12:27-28; 13:31-32). As Balthasar says:

[I]t is not as though the 'passive action' of the incarnate Son became an 'active action' from his death onwards....[E]ven in the 'return', in the 'going home', in the ascent once more' of the Son to the Father,...the dependence of the Son upon the Father is never superceded. This becomes clear where the glorification of the Son by the Father is understood as the proof brought by the Father that every glorious fruit that has resulted from the mission of the Son has its final foundation in the perfect, absolute obedience, and gives glory to this obedience too as the perfected revelation of the eternal love of the Son....[And for its part] the Son's eternal love for the Father is itself nothing but the act of making space for the eternal love of the Father for the Son.⁷⁰²

The preceding sentence leads us back into the realm of the inner-divine Trinity, concerning which Balthasar maintains not only that the paternal modality of receptivity is consummative of

⁷⁰⁰ YCY, 124.

⁷⁰¹ This assertion finds support in Balthasar's commendation of Richard of St. Victor's definition of "person". Richard defines the person as *spiritualis naturae incommunicabilis existentia*, as the incommunicably proper existence of spiritual nature. For Balthasar, the person is here understood as *ex-sistentia*, "as a spiritual subject that earns the name person only by going out of itself (*ex*)--in God as something relative". Balthasar, "On the concept of person", in *Communio* 1 (Spring, 1986), 22.

divine Sonship, but also that this self-same modality allows the Son to collaborate in the consummation of divine Paternity. For (as we have already argued) if divine Paternity is identical with the Father's begetting the Son as his perfectly reciprocating Beloved, and if nonetheless the Father allows the Son to consent over-against his act of generating, then in this respect the Father allows the Son to let him be Father. Hence: "Unity and distinction in God so far transcend what can be calculated with the limits set by numbers, so far transcend the sequence of time, that both the responsive love of the Son and the mutuality of the Spirit continue eternally to affect the very act of generation that is the eternal Source of all."⁷⁰³

By no means is Balthasar suggesting that the consent of the Son (and of the Spirit) can be regarded as the condition for the possibility of the eternal generative act. Within the nonreversible order of the immanent processions, the Father gives the Son the entire divinity together with the ability to receive himself and gratefully return love for love.⁷⁰⁴ As for this ability, it denotes not simply the "area of infinite freedom" called for by the Son's act, but also the filial self-disposing *as called forth by* the love of the Father who shows the Son everything that he himself does, enabling the Son thereby to do likewise--shows that he is the "first" to be receptive to the self-disposing of the Other. In fine: paternal receptivity is integral to the efficacy of generating the filial correspondence that collaboratively brings to consummation the I-Thou relation in which the personhood of both Lover and Beloved subsists.

F. The paternal dependence and expectation

In light of the foregoing, a distinctively paternal hypostatic modality of dependence can be observed. As we saw to be the case with Balthasar's predicating receptivity of God the Father, so

⁷⁰² *GL* 7, 250-51.

⁷⁰³ *WEL*, 16.

⁷⁰⁴ See *HCE* 139 -40.

here we need consider in what respect the application of the notion of dependence can be expanded to include, in addition to the Persons of the Son and the Spirit, also the unoriginated Father. As a related question, we can ask whether the modalities of dependence proper to the Son and the Spirit are merely due to the fact that both owe their possession of the divine being to the Father as Primal Source of the Trinity. The term “merely” is key, since for Balthasar the divine processions are not merely essential operations of the divine substance but constitute Personal self-disposings according to a hierarchical order. What is given over to the Son and the Spirit respectively is the “form of divinity” (the “super-form”⁷⁰⁵) as the Father originally defines it by his act of paternal love. In letting-be the Other to a distinct hypostatic act of infinite freedom, the Father determines for himself a unique manner of dependence that is intrinsic to his love-act as Father in his relations to the Son and to the Spirit. Consequently, in their turn the modalities of divine dependence proper to the Son and the Spirit bespeak something more than simply procession from another, for they refer back to the originless Origin in whom the glory of the divine essence as self-surrenduring love is such as to grant freedom to the Other for a self-disposing integral to the perfection of the triune life.⁷⁰⁶ Dependence, then, from this vantage point comes to be viewed as one of the infinitely positive qualities that comprise the divine Being-as-love; originating in the Father’s mode of being God, the quality of dependence (as well as receptivity, letting-be, etc.) takes on asymmetrical modalities over against the Father in the process of absolute love.

Now where there is receptivity and dependence vis-à-vis an Other’s self-giving there can be gratitude. Hence, we have Balthasar’s assertion that “already in the generative act of the Father lies a gratitude to the Son, who wills to allow himself to be generated, as likewise in the Son’s allowing

⁷⁰⁵ *GL* 1, 432.

⁷⁰⁶ “There is even something (super-) feminine about the Father, too, since, as we have shown, in the action of begetting and breathing-forth he allows himself to be co-determined by the Persons who thus proceed from him; however, this does not affect his primacy in the order of the Trinity”; Balthasar, “Die Würde der Frau”, *Communio* 11

himself to be generated there lies a gratitude to the Father, who wills to generate him”.⁷⁰⁷ Given the (non-temporal) sequence of activity in the trinitarian Godhead, it thus becomes possible to regard even the Son’s disposition of thanksgiving as the perfect reflection of the Father’s being. (We will have more to say about this in our excursus on God the Father and the Eucharist.)

Just as previously we saw that to ascribe receptivity to the Father is not to suggest that the Son’s responsive love is the condition for the possibility of the Father’s self-giving, so here we pause briefly to examine whether Balthasar’s conception of a paternal modality of dependence and, concomitantly, of gratitude in any way vitiates the unconditional nature of the Father’s generative act. Balthasar is entirely consistent in affirming that the Father alone does not require being loved in order to love. As the Primal Lover, the Father holds nothing back as if needing to receive love in order to surrender himself in generating. Although the nature of generative love intends to elicit a reciprocation wherein lies its own consummation, nonetheless, it is not the case that the Father depends upon the Son’s response with respect to his initiatory, defining, evocative, and enabling activity which is the source and “food” of the Son’s self-disposing (Jn 4:34; 6:57; 8:28-29). And while the Father is grateful to the Son who answers his address of love, his gratitude (like his affirmation and veneration of the Son who returns to him) is equally expressive of the perfect selflessness which characterizes God’s Fatherhood. Balthasar is uncompromising in his rejection of any attempt to interpret the generating Father as acting out of self-interest in an Hegelian sense, since absolute love at its groundless ground can act out of nothing less than the selflessness intrinsic to infinite freedom. But neither should the selflessness of the Father’s love be allied with an Arian conception of the Father’s self-standingness: rather, here too we must walk the knife’s edge. It is a selflessness, not of a Father who already possesses himself without reference to the

(1982) 346-352, quoted in *TD IV*, 80. *Ibid.*, 76, Balthasar quotes von Speyr (*Apokalypse*, 247): “All the Persons of the Trinity determine one another reciprocally.”

Son (he is, after all, a subsistent relation), but of a Father who abandons himself without calculation in order to beget a counterpart love of the same incalculable self-lessness.

It is but a single step from here to Balthasar's notion of the divine expectation [*Erwartung*] belonging to the trinitarian Father. Concerning this notion we should ask, first of all, how Balthasar endeavors to reconcile it with divine omniscience. Already we have seen how Balthasar is able to offer a reinterpretation of God's all-powerfulness according to the form of mutuality in love such that, from the start, the Father's act entails a unity of omnipotence and powerlessness vis-à-vis the Son. We can expect, therefore, that Balthasar will take the same route in his effort to conceive of the Father's mode of divine knowledge as both limited by nothing and expectant of everything in relation to the one being begotten.⁷⁰⁸

According to Balthasar, since God is tri-personal love we ought not to consider divine knowledge (omniscience) as having its most adequate analogue in human "scientific" knowledge--as represented, for example, by Descartes with his criteria of clear and distinct ideas, or by Kantian epistemology according to which the knowing subject imposes categories upon the object in order to grasp it. Instead, Balthasar proposes that we consider divine knowledge principally in terms of the inter-personal dialogue wherein to know is to behold the Other's self-disposing of divinity. Knowledge of this kind includes the element of mystery, for "the love that leaves-free the Other always offers him something 'which transcends the capacities of knowing', something that has an utterly unique origin, springing from the 'hidden depths of the one and communicated to the hidden depths of the other'".⁷⁰⁹ This is true even at the human level, inasmuch as the more intimate is

⁷⁰⁷ TD IV, 76. Balthasar is quoting von Speyr in *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 194.

⁷⁰⁸ We find, for example, Balthasar quoting with approval von Speyr's assertion that, in regard to the divine Persons, "their very knowledge of each other takes on the form and laws of love". TD IV, 69, n. 54; the passage quoted is from von Speyr's *Kath. Briefe* vol. II, 302.

⁷⁰⁹ TD IV, 83-84; inner quotations are from von Speyr's *Kath. Briefe* vol. I, 138-140. "[W]eil in der freilassenden Liebe dem Andern immer etwas zugetraut wird, 'was seine erkennbaren Möglichkeiten übertrifft', was

one's knowledge of the beloved, the greater is one's awareness of the unsoundable depths of his/her unique person. It is infinitely more the case when the divine Father-Lover is in the presence of his divine Beloved.⁷¹⁰ Indeed, no greater intimacy can be conceived--and hence no greater unity of knowledge and mystery--than that of the mutual *circumcessio* (*perichoresis*) of the divine Persons.

In Balthasar's words:

The divine hypostases proceed from one another and thus (including the Father, the Primal Source) are perfectly open to one another--but, for all eternity, they are not interchangeable. As a result, this divine exchange or dialogue always contains two things: the partners are perfectly transparent to one another, and they possess a kind of impenetrable "personal" mystery....Each of the divine Persons is just as sovereignly free as the others, although, in this freedom, each is codetermined by the *ordo processionis* and the trinitarian unity. No one can predict, for instance, how the Son will "use" the one and only divine freedom in order to invent ideas and acts of love; since the Son and the Spirit are consubstantial with the Father, it is equally their privilege, on the basis of the one divine freedom, to do surprising and astounding things, as it is the privilege of the Father, as the original Source of all things.⁷¹¹

A passage like this calls for some qualification. Certainly the Son *is* the absolute Thou whose self-giving images that of the Father, so that whatever "surprise" the Son brings to the Father cannot mean that he somehow moves "outside" his relation of being begotten as the perfect reflection of the Father-Begetter.⁷¹² And the Spirit *is* the personified "We" of the mutual love between the Father and the Son; as such the Spirit does not move "outside" this relation to "blow over" Father and Son with surprise. Balthasar may be excused for using such terms as "surprising"

aus dem Eigensten dem Andern geschenkt wird, 'aus der eigenen Verborgenheit unmittelbar in die Verborgenheit des andern'." I have slightly modified G. Harrison's translation.

⁷¹⁰ To the objection that the "surprising" aspect of human love "is due precisely to the inability of humans ever to give themselves to one another totally", or again, "to the unavoidable partial nature of human knowledge" and so unattributable to God, G.F. O'Hanlon replies on Balthasar's behalf that an analogous aspect of "surprise" in God "is more true to the scriptural and, in particular, the Johannine account of the liveliness of trinitarian love". Furthermore, "far from decreasing as human love grows in knowledge and fullness it can be seen that the more perfect human love is, and the more transparent the lovers are to one another, so too there increases the aspect of 'ever-more'". O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 128-29. Among Balthasar works, see *TD IV*, 26; *TD 2*, 118-19; and *GL 1*, 611-12, 615-18.

⁷¹¹ *TD 2*, 258.

⁷¹² "Einmal wird der Sohn in seinem Gezeugtwerden 'dem Vater die Ganzheit seines Notwendigkeitswillens' lassen, so dass er 'in keiner Weise seinen mit ihm gezeugten freien Willen einschleibt, um irgendwie an seiner eigenen

and “astounding” in a metaphorical sense insofar as his intention is to underscore “the impenetrable ‘personal’ mystery” of each way of being infinitely free. Balthasar seems to be making room by his surprising and astounding choice of terms for the infinite magnitude of self-disposing in love that is constitutive of each Person and which should not be minimized on our side by the application of a monologically structured model of the essential operations of the divine nature.⁷¹³ Having made room in the eternal and absolute Being of the triune God (“including the Father as the Primal Source”) for the “surprise” that comes with perfect knowledge of an Other’s dialogical exercise of infinite freedom, Balthasar has provided the inner-divine presupposition for a notion of God’s omniscience that permits creatures an exercise of finite freedom which can be genuinely inventive and indeed codeterminative in what concerns the development of the world and the outcome of one’s personal destiny.⁷¹⁴

Of course, all that Balthasar has to say about the Father’s expectation remains based upon a conception of eternal life that precludes its being described as a becoming (as a movement from potency to act, from poverty to wealth, from before to after), despite Balthasar’s recognition that “we cannot avoid using the concept ‘process’/‘procession’ in the context of the life of the Trinity”. The divine processions “which give rise to the fellowship of Persons are not subject to temporal

Gestaltung mitzuformen’. Andererseits aber hat ‘der Vater dem Sohn alles gegeben’ und ‘mit diesem Alles auch seinen Willen zur Verfügung gestellt’.” TD IV, 77; inner citation from von Speyr’s *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 51.

⁷¹³ Consider the collection of the following statements: “Was das Moment des Raumes angeht, so liegt seine trinitarische Uridee im Raumlassen als Freigeben, als Sich-lösen des Schenkenden vom Beschenkten, der sich in echter Freiheit vom Schenkenden erhält und damit absetzt....In dem gegenseitigen Freilassen der Personen in Gott liegt ein wesentliches Moment ihrer Liebe.” TD IV, 82. “Der Vater legt den Sohn in der Zeugung nicht fest, ‘er lässt ihn vielmehr frei in den unendlichen Raum seiner eigenen sohnhaften Freiheit, seiner eigenen göttlichen Souveränität.’” *Ibid.*, 86; inner citation is from von Speyr’s *Kath. Briefe* vol. I, 141.

⁷¹⁴ Thus, on the basis of trinitarian doctrine, Balthasar offers a corrective to Luther’s notion of divine omniscience which notion requires that its correlate, divine omnipotence, be such as to rule out a free self-disposing on the part of the creaturely other. According to Luther, God’s omnipotence means that “God works everything in everything that is....The unchangeableness and constancy of God’s purpose...depends upon his being alone the one who works all in all.” “It seems blasphemous even to think that God does not work man’s decision to believe or not to believe, as though God could be surprised by man’s choice....Whoever speaks seriously of God must necessarily teach his foreknowledge and his unconditional determination of all things.” Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press) 110-111, 275. See from Luther’s works WA 18, 706, 712, 718f.; *ibid.*, 19, 219. It is

limitation, but are eternally operative”.⁷¹⁵ To be sure, the Son is ever present to the Father, yet he is so precisely in the twofold aspect of coming forth from and returning to his paternal origin. When we consider this twofold aspect in terms of the Son’s receptively active (or receptive/active) mode of infinite freedom vis-à-vis the generating Father, we can see why Balthasar agrees with A. von Speyr that the Father, for his part, knows and loves the Son “in such a way that expectation and fulfillment exactly coincide”.⁷¹⁶

But if, following Balthasar, we are going to speak of an eternal expectation that belongs to the Father’s mode of divine knowledge in begetting the Son, we must not lose sight of the fact that all the Son does, however “surprising” as “the infinitely Other of the Father,”⁷¹⁷ is by virtue of being begotten. In other words, inasmuch as the Father is expectant of the Son’s return, he is so on account of the generative efficacy of his primal act of self-giving. Yet more can be said. For the notion of paternal expectation is directly linked to the Father’s modality of letting-be (or leaving-free) vis-à-vis the One being generated. Regarding the Father’s letting-be the Son, we have already elucidated its generative nature. As integral to the unsurpassable archetypal form of divine love, the Father’s letting-be is engendering of its answering image: the Son who lets the Father be at work in him. (See Section D of this chapter.) This prompts us to inquire into the generative nature of the Father’s expectation.

As when a lover “sees” in what lies the beloved’s perfection, and his loving regard draws forth the appropriate response, so by distant analogy the Father’s eternal expectation that the Son be the Image of love is itself generative of the Son’s collaborative self-disposing. The Father’s expectant regard summons the Son to be perfect as he himself is perfect, which perfection can only

worth noting that Balthasar’s conception of the Father’s generation of the Son provides in this instance what the neo-scholastic treatises *De Deo trino* could not.

⁷¹⁵ TD IV, 67.

⁷¹⁶ TD IV, 81, n. 1, quoting von Speyr, *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 31.

mean the Son's bliss.⁷¹⁸ (Because of the trinitarian *circumincessio* we would be wrong to consider this paternal expectancy one-sidedly, as if the Father simply holds himself at a distance from the Son's collaboration, exacting demands without handing over himself--one with his fatherly work--to serve as the immanently active and efficacious "influence" upon the Son and his divine freedom.)⁷¹⁹ And since what is evoked in the Son is a correspondence which in its turn is eternally expectant of the Father's receptive affirmation for its consummation, it is a begotten self-giving-over that points back as the mirroring counterpart to the unoriginated paternal expectancy.

We are now in a position to understand with Balthasar that the blessedness of infinite freedom in God involves "the joys of giving and receiving and the even deeper joys of finding oneself in the Other".⁷²⁰ Granted the eternal simultaneity in which both Father and Son know of their reciprocal love, we can say that it is proper to the Son's mode of bliss to find himself in the

⁷¹⁷ TD 4, 325.

⁷¹⁸ TD IV, 84: "So hat der Sohn, der seinen 'göttlichen sohnhaften Willen' hat, 'von Ewigkeit keine grössere Freude, als den Willen des Vaters zu tun', so sehr, dass er ihn noch als Mensch im Abstand des Leidens, da er ihm 'fremd und unverständlich erscheinen wird', vollkommen tun wird." Inner citations are from von Speyr's *Bergpredigt*, 174-75.

⁷¹⁹ If, in our view, Balthasar's treatment of the notion of an eternal expectation among the trinitarian Persons in TD IV, 57-86, does not sufficiently spell out the generative nature of the Father's mode of expectancy, nonetheless, what we established in Part One of our study as we approached the mystery of divine Paternity "from below" provided us with adequate grounds for our present extrapolation in terms of the immanent Trinity. Also pertinent here is the thematic interpretation we can give to Balthasar's remarks concerning the divine "face" in GL 6, on a theology of the Old Covenant. Consider the following in summary:

The fact that Israel has been addressed by the word of God and has been handed over the name of God means that it finds itself directly before the "face" of the Absolute "I". This divine face is Yahweh himself in his free self-disposing as the "I" who graciously turns toward his chosen one and becomes *personally present* in the covenantal events of history. In Balthasar's words (GL 1, 328-29), "the Biblical experience of God [entails] the mutuality of vision between God and man....Man's vision of God is like an echo of the antecedent and foundational event of being seen by God....[H]is vision of God is included in his being seen by God." The chosen one knows indeed that the face of Yahweh, the Father of Israel, turns toward him, and in the light of the paternal glance he is enabled to correspond to love with love. Consequently, for another to behold the face of the chosen one would be to see the face of one turned toward the radiance of the Father's loving regard, whereby the chosen one's own face is made reflectively radiant with the look of one beloved. And precisely because it is by virtue of the divine gaze which rests upon him that the chosen one's face becomes thus radiant and mirrors that of the Primal Lover, to behold the face of the beloved is to see in it the face of the Father. "The real fulfillment of the Old Testament", says Balthasar, "lies in such heart-to-heart, face-to-face immediacy, and hence we can understand the battle the God of the covenant fights against all images of God, which pretend to mediate him to man but in fact only put distance between God and man" (GL 6, 72). For it is the face of the beloved himself, responsively turned toward the Source of all love, that is intended by God to serve as his living image in the world. "In the beginning", in the eternity of God's inner-divine life, God himself has assumed absolute responsibility for this full self-disclosure through the mission of his only Son, who is ever "turned toward" the Father in a mutuality of vision that is one with his eternal generation from the Father (Jn 1:1).

Father as the Father's primal expectation and fulfillment,⁷²¹ even as it is equally true that the fathomless bliss proper to the Father lies in his "(passively) receiving back" the grateful and expectant self-surrender of his begotten Image.⁷²²

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Excursus:
God the Father and the Eucharist

"Let us joyfully cry out in thanks to God our Father whose love guides and nourishes his people" (Week III, Thursday Morning Prayer, Intercessions).

Balthasar's theology of the immanent Trinity can support an elaboration that shows God's Fatherhood to be the primal source, and indeed form, of the Eucharist. The central thread to be followed concerns the identity in the Son of his self-sacrificial love and his self-returning-in-thanks to the Father, which Balthasar interprets in such a way that it is possible to consider not only the former (the gesture of responsive self-sacrifice) but also the latter (the filial self-disposing in thanksgiving) as perfectly imaging the Father.

Within the inner-divine life of absolute freedom in love which constitutes the Trinity, it is the Father who, in an initiatory self-sacrificial gesture, delivers over himself along with the entire divine substance to the Son he is begetting. In so doing, the Father leaves-free the Son to receive the paternal self-offering in absolute openness and consent. This means that the Father "knows the completion of his Paternity's fruitfulness through the Son's (eucharistic) grateful owing and

⁷²⁰ TD 2, 257.

⁷²¹ TD IV, 69: "[S]o ist 'der Sohn die erste Erwartung des Vaters und auch seine erste Erfüllung, und er bleibt die Ewigkeit lang das, was er war und ist: Erwartung und Erfüllung.'" Balthasar is quoting with approval von Speyr's remarks in *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 23.

⁷²² HCE138: "Der Vater als der selbst ursprunglose Ursprung bringt in seiner totalen Selbsthingabe den Sohn hervor, der sich demzufolge ewig passiv empfängt, aber sich ebenso ewig aktiv seinem Ursprung verdankt und zurückgibt, so dass die Seligkeit des sich schenkenden Vaters ebenso ewig und unvordenklich im ('passiven') Rückempfang des sich verdankenden (eucharistischen) Sohnes liegt wie in seiner eigenen ewigen aktiven Selbsthingabe."

returning of self over against him”.⁷²³ Indeed, on this account Balthasar states that “already in the generative act of the Father lies a gratitude to the Son, who wills to allow himself to be generated, as likewise in the Son’s allowing himself to be generated there lies a gratitude to the Father, who wills to generate him”.⁷²⁴ Implied in the foregoing is a point that warrants reiteration: if, on the part of the Son, his filial receptivity coincides with his self-returning-in-thanks to the same limitless measure of surrender as the Father, we ought not to think that the Father, on his part, keeps himself at a purely passive distance over against the Son’s response; rather, the Father’s self-delivering-over (inclusive of the paternal modality of gratitude) ever engenders--accompanies and enables--”from within” the Son’s imaging correspondence.

When the Son’s inner-divine relationship to the Father is transposed in the historical terms of his mission, his filial disposition can be described as receptively living from, or “making space” for, the Father’s love in him.⁷²⁵ Balthasar sees this evidenced, for example, in the prayer of Jesus. “Jesus...lives from the prayer in which the Father gives him the nourishment which he needs. ...[His prayer is turned toward] the self-giving of the Father, who gives himself to Jesus as the food that is completely satisfying.”⁷²⁶ Moreover, when we consider that the incarnate Son’s return of self-giving to the Father coincides with his being-begotten by the Father as his Image (in time), it is essentially a *grateful* return which acknowledges the power of the Father’s self-giving as engendering of its own. Jesus, through his own gesture of thankful self-delivering-over as this culminates in his sacrificial death, reveals the Father to be the primal source of the love which outpours itself for the sake of the Beloved unto interpersonal communion. Indeed, even Jesus’

⁷²³ HCE140: “[D]er Vater durch die eucharistische Selbstverdankung des Sohnes ihm gegenüber seiner vollendet fruchtbaren Väterlichkeit inne wird.”

⁷²⁴ TD IV, 76. Balthasar is quoting von Speyr in *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 194. And in *ibid.*, 221, Balthasar observes: “the Father owes his Fatherhood to the Son who lets himself be generated”.

⁷²⁵ See GL 7, 251, 290-91.

filial stance of thanksgiving as such serves the function of disclosing the inmost disposition of the Father-Origin, since, as we saw above, there is a paternal modality of gratitude to the receiving Beloved lying already in the generating Father.

Consequently if, in the Christian dispensation, to us the Father gives *the Son* as the bread of life, does this mean that the Son wholly replaces or substitutes for the original vivifying love of the Father? Quite the contrary: Jesus, in giving over his entire substance in the Eucharist, communicates to us the divine life that is his as the only-begotten of the Father and thus which he entirely owes to the Father (albeit possessing it “consubstantially”).⁷²⁷ “Just as...I have life because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me will have life because of me” (Jn 6:57). As early as the third century A.D., Origen had commented that “perhaps this is the reason why he is the invisible image of God...the image of the first [paternal] will....[B]eing the image of the Father’s goodness, he says: ‘Why do you call me good?’ For indeed it is this will that is the Son’s food, and it is because of this food that he is what he is.”⁷²⁸

The Eucharist, then, precisely because it communicates the “whole Christ” who *is* his filial mode of grateful self-sacrifice proceeding from and returning to the paternal Origin,⁷²⁹ can be understood as the Father’s empowering the Son to beget his Church to a share in his relationship of natural sonship before the Father. This is why every eucharistic celebration by the ecclesial community is an act of thanksgiving to the Father, during which all the participants--through, with,

⁷²⁶ *GL* 7, 135. Ratzinger offers a similar remark in *Principles*, 32: “The fact that he is Son means above all that he prays. That, in the ground of his being, he is always open to the living God, always has his place in him, always regards his existence as an exchange with him and so always lives from this innermost depth.” See Mt 4:4; Jn 4:32,34.

⁷²⁷ Balthasar, “Eternal Life”, *Communio* 18 (1991) nr. 1, 14: “[In the Eucharist, Jesus] can distribute himself (and in himself, the triune God) to all, so that all have a share in the Eucharistic attitude of Jesus.” In addition, *TD* 2, 261; *NE*, 217.

⁷²⁸ *In Joann.*, XIII, 36, Preuschen, 261, 24ff. (PG 14, 461C).

⁷²⁹ See *TD* 2, 268.

and in the Son--give glory to the Father who is the ultimate generative source of their being enabled to give themselves over as beloved children of God.⁷³⁰

G. The paternal affectivity of the immutable God

The aim of Part Two of our study has been to throw light on the inner-divine Fatherhood of God as indicated by the economy of Jesus Christ (Part One) and to do so in such a way that the “immanent” Fatherhood of God, in its turn, can be more readily understood in terms of the transcendental theological conditions for the possibility of what occurs in the orders of creation and redemption (hence the three-tiered exposition we have employed throughout Part Two). In this concluding section we intend to address what Balthasar regards as the basic problem of theodramatic theory, albeit for our purposes we transpose its formulation to refer specifically to God the Father. If what occurs in the divine economy is a dramatic interplay between infinite and finite freedom (the only interpretation which does justice to the biblical facts), the question arises whether the trinitarian Father, the God of Jesus Christ, enters into the action in a manner proper to him, or does he remain “the sublime spectator”? Can we say that the trinitarian Father is affected in some way by the finite freedom with which he endows his creatures? If so, is he still the one who, as the author of the theological drama, “stands at the point where the drama comes into being as a unity, so that...it may attain unity once more”?⁷³¹ And what of his handing over his only Son

⁷³⁰ UYB, 48: “On the occasion of his institution of the Eucharist, Jesus gives thanks to the Father “who allows him to accomplish this pouring-out of himself (Mk 14:23; Mt 26:27; Lk 22:17; 1Cor 11:24). The most decisive act of thanksgiving by Jesus takes place precisely here, at the moment when he gives himself away....Every eucharistic celebration by the ecclesial community is in essence an act of thanksgiving to the Father during which all participants, together with the Son,...are enabled to give themselves away [by virtue of the Father’s primally generative self-giving]. In almost countless passages, Paul reminds his communities of this need to give thanks to God...for having received the grace that enables [them] to spend [themselves] for Christ’s work: ‘Thanking the Father for having enabled us to...’ (Col 1:12).” In addition, TD 3, 39: “The Eucharist is one of the sacramental ‘means of grace’ through which the created human being becomes a child of the Father.” See also UYB, 64; NE, 217; CSL, 79; and WEL, 80.

⁷³¹ TD 1, 268-269. For Balthasar’s generalized formulation of the basic problem of theodramatic theory, see TD1, 69.

in the role of the “lamb slain”? Does this not entail in some sense “a drama of God himself”⁷³² in which the Father-Author and the Son-Actor mutually “stake their all” on the performance? But then are we still speaking of *theo*-dramatic action, that is, of action proper to God as the unconditioned and absolute ground of reality, or has the concept of God derived from the Christ event meant the forfeiture of God’s absoluteness and immutability?

Already centuries ago Arius refused to accept the notion of divinity indicated by the self-disclosure of the God of theodramatic action, not least among his objections being that, on the basis of a Platonic conception of the *monarchia* of the Father, it is not possible to conceive there to be a unity of affectivity and immutability in God. If, in behalf of the divine Father, Arius rejected the idea of divine affectivity while retaining immutability, in the modern era among Hegelian and Process theologians it is divine immutability that is discarded and affectivity retained, and once again--albeit within a different philosophical framework--an either/or solution is proffered for the Father’s sake, so to speak, inasmuch as it is thought necessary that he undergo a process toward self-realization in which he is affected in and by the conditions of the consciousness of humankind. The inquiry before us, then, concerns whether it is possible to propose a theology of God the Father capable of resolving this fundamental problem inherent to theodramatic theory, namely, the unity of immutability and affectivity in God. A simple affirmation of the possibility, of course, will not bring our inquiry to a close. Balthasar, for his part, attempts to resolve the problem in a way that takes account of the height, depth, and breadth of the theodramatic action; and we, for our part, will attempt to explicate and assess the distinctive contribution his doctrine of the trinitarian Father makes in this regard.

⁷³² See *TD* 1, 69.

G.1. *The parameters of theological speculation*

Prior to dealing with Balthasar's own reflections, we do well to lay down the parameters of theological speculation concerning the particular issue of affectivity being predicated of the immutable God. At least five points are to be taken into consideration, according to the directives of the International Theological Commission as set forth in its 1981 document "Theology, Christology, Anthropology", II, B: "The Trinitarian Aspect of the Cross of Jesus Christ, or the 'Suffering of God'".

First, God cannot be said to be mutable insofar as this term signifies a movement from potency to act.

With regard to the immutability of God it must be said that the divine life is inexhaustible and without limit, so much so that God has no need whatever for creatures (cf. *DS*, 3002). No human event could gain for him anything new or actuate in him any potentiality whatsoever. God, therefore, could not be subject to any change either by way of diminution or by way of progress. "Therefore, since God is not susceptible to change in any of these different ways, it is proper to him to be absolutely immutable" (Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I, q.9, a.1c). The same affirmation is found in Sacred Scripture with regard to God the Father, "in whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17).⁷³³

Nonetheless, in the second place, we ought not to understand the immutability of God as indicating a divine indifference to human events.

God loves us with the love of friendship, and he wishes to be loved by us in return. When this love is offended, Sacred Scripture speaks of suffering on the part of God. On the other hand, it speaks of joy when the sinner is converted (Lk 15:7)....The two aspects [divine immutability and absolute love's affectivity] need each other. If one or the other is neglected, the concept of God as he reveals himself is not respected.⁷³⁴

Thirdly, we are directed to consider that if the Church Fathers stressed the impassibility [*apatheia*] of God (against mythological conceptions of a suffering deity), the capacity to suffer [*pathos*] that the Fathers felt obliged not to attribute to God is that of "involuntary suffering

⁷³³ ITC, "Theology, Christology, Anthropology" (1981), II, B, 4.1, p. 221.

imposed from the outside or as a consequence of a fallen nature”.⁷³⁵ Kasper, himself a member of the ITC, echoes this assertion in pointing out that the Fathers regarded “*pathos*” as a “non-free external passive experience and even as an expression of the human fallenness brought about by sin”.⁷³⁶ Thus we can understand why Gregory Thaumaturgus, among certain of the Fathers, could employ a dialectical form of expression: God in Jesus Christ suffers in an impassible fashion, because he suffers in virtue of a free decision while retaining dominion over the situation all the while (*Greg. Thaum. Ad Theopompum*, IV-VIII).⁷³⁷

Fourthly, “*pathos*” may be ascribed to an impassible God insofar as it signifies “the suffering of compassion” or “the suffering of love”. Across the centuries Christian theologians have maintained that the suffering of compassion--the ability to be touched by another’s distress--is a perfection of the human spirit and as such can be attributed analogously to God in an eminent degree and without any imperfection.⁷³⁸ Origen is commended by both Kasper and Balthasar for arguing that the Son can be said to suffer, not only because his suffering is wholly innocent and freely accepted, but because it is wholly an expression of love--in a word, the suffering of compassion is an economic modality of an attribute of the eternal Son. “First he suffered, then he came down. What was the suffering he endured for us? It is the passion of charity.”⁷³⁹ In what concerns the effort to reconcile affectivity and impassibility in God Origen’s argument is especially useful, since it bases itself on the unchangeable pure act of absolute love which *is* God’s essence.

⁷³⁴ ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, B, 4.2, pp. 221-22.

⁷³⁵ ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, B, 3, p. 221.

⁷³⁶ W. Kasper, *GJC*, 191. See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* VIII, 17 (CCL 47, 234f.); Athanasius, *Adv. Arianos* III, 32-34 (PG 26, 389-98); Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* VI (PG 45, 721B-725B).

⁷³⁷ See ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, B, 3, p. 221. For Balthasar’s treatment of the notion of the “*apatheia*” of God as found in the Church Fathers, see TD IV, 194-99. In addition, see H. Crouzel, “La Passion de l’Impassible”, in *L’Homme devant Dieu*, Coll. Théologie 56 (Mélanges Henri de Lubac I, Aubier 1963) 269-79.

⁷³⁸ The ITC mentions the statement by Leo I that the *pathos* of compassion, when predicated of God, signifies “the inclination of commiseration...and not the absence of power” (Leo I, *DS*, 293). See also *Greg. Thaum. Ad Theopompum*; and John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, #7 (*AAS*, 72, 1980, 1199ff.).

Fifthly and finally, we may affirm that God the Father--he who so loved the world that he gave his only Son (Jn 3:14)--is not simply unaffected by the situation and destiny of his beloved creatures. Once again it is Origen who contributes an understanding of the "suffering" of the impassible God which permits an extension into the mystery of the inner-trinitarian life, reaching to the paternal source himself. For is not the Father merciful also, such that "he suffers in his own manner? In his providence he must suffer what men suffer (*passionem patitur humanam*)....If he experiences pity and compassion, he is touched by the suffering of love. On our behalf he sets himself in the place of those in whom the grandeur of his nature is prevented from existing, to support us in our human sufferings."⁷⁴⁰ Indeed, on our behalf he does so pre-eminently in sending his Son (who is the personal "locus" of the Father's self-giving) to assume the place of creatures in whom God's love is to be brought to perfection (see Eph 1:3-10; 1Jn 4:12).⁷⁴¹ Consequently, if we interpret against the backdrop of the *trinitarian* God the second point enumerated above, nothing forbids our conceding that creatures can affect God the Father inasmuch as he loves us in his Son from before the foundation of the world (1Pt 1:19-20). Admittedly this assertion warrants more detailed consideration, but the ITC would have us move on to ask whether God the Father can be said to be affected in respect of the mission of his Son.

⁷³⁹ Origen: "Primum passus est, deinde descendit. Quae est ista quam pro nobis passus est, passio? Caritatis est passio." In Ez hom. 6,6 (Baehrens VIII, 384f.); cited by Balthasar in *TD* IV, 199 and by W. Kasper in *GJC*, 191.

⁷⁴⁰ Origen: "Ipse pater non est impassibilis. Si rogetur, miseretur et condolet, patitur aliquid caritatis et fit in iis, in quibus juxta magnitudinem naturae suae non potest esse, et propter nos humanas sustinet passiones." In Ez hom. 6,6 (Baehrens VIII, 384f.). Vgl. Comm. in Rom VII, 9 (PG 14, 1129A), Sel. in Ez (PG 13 812A). Cited by Balthasar in *TD* IV, 199. But medieval theologians, says Balthasar, show a tendency to conceive of divine impassibility in a narrower sense than did their predecessors. Consider, for example, the following statement from Anselm's *Proslogian* (ch. VIII): "[Lord,] how are you compassionate, and, at the same time, passionless?...Truly, you are so [compassionate] in terms of our experience, but you are not so in terms of your own. For when you behold us in our wretchedness, we experience the effect of compassion, but you do not experience the feeling. Therefore, you are both compassionate, because you save the wretched...; and not compassionate, because you are affected by no sympathy for wretchedness." See also Thomas Aquinas, *SCG*, II, 25. These passages are provided by Balthasar in *TD* IV, 200.

⁷⁴¹ Gregory of Nyssa, in his turn, draws attention to the *philantropia* of the Father in the entire *oikonomia* of the Son. See C. Eunomium VI (PG 45, 721B-725B); cited by Balthasar in *TD* IV, 198.

Benefiting from a kind of renaissance of trinitarian doctrine in contemporary theology, the ITC renders explicit the conceptual extrapolation from the economic to the immanent Trinity so that the modalities of divine freedom in love entailed in the Father's sending of the Son "as the immaculate Lamb" are clearly seen to presuppose and be in function of the Father's eternal generating of the Son. In the words of the Commission: "[T]here is a very close correspondence between the gift of divinity that the Father gives to the Son and the gift by which the Father consigns his Son to the abandonment of the Cross. Since, however, the Resurrection is also present in the eternal plan of God, the suffering of 'separation' is always overcome by the joy of union; the compassion of the trinitarian God for the suffering of the Word is properly understood as the work of most perfect [hence immutable] love, which is normally a source of joy."⁷⁴²

Without question the approach taken by the ITC toward a solution to the problem of the "suffering of God" sets its sight upon the inner-trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son which relationship, when prolonged in the Father's giving over the Son (and therein his Paternity) to assume our condition of godlessness, is capable of enduring "the suffering of 'separation'" precisely as a common work of boundless love. The possibility, grounded in the triune God, that the passion of love coincides with joy, that separation is coextensive with communion, that the utmost form of life can be a love-death, that both affectivity and immutability are proper to absolute love: these are themes which receive particular emphasis in Balthasar's own reflections on the matter, as we have previously shown and will refer to again below.

Elsewhere in the Commission's document the language of kenosis is used to describe the Son's mission in time and as man. Of importance for our present purposes is the Commission's express affirmation that the "kenotic event" of the Son's mission "affects in some way the being proper to God the Father...insofar as he...accomplishes these mysteries and really shares them as

⁷⁴² ITC, "Theology, Christology, Anthropology" (1981), II, B, 5.2, p. 222.

belonging to himself, together with the Son and the Holy Spirit”,⁷⁴³ that is, in the manner proper to his paternal mode of being and in virtue of the trinitarian *perichoresis*. To be sure, in the endeavor to elucidate this paternal affectivity and engagement, “the distinction must be maintained between the immanent Trinity...and the Trinity of the economy of salvation.”⁷⁴⁴ With this distinction secured, we can acknowledge that “in the intimate life of the triune God the very potential exists for the realization of these events which, through the inexplicable freedom of God, take place for us in the history of salvation”.⁷⁴⁵ If indeed the Father is affected in some way by the paschal event, we are thus directed to seek the condition for such a possibility in the eternal event of the Father’s begetting the Son.

The foregoing remarks of the ITC give us an affirmative answer as to the possibility of developing a doctrine of God the Father entirely consonant with “the two aspects”--divine immutability and absolute love’s affectivity--which are integral to “the concept of God as he reveals himself”.⁷⁴⁶ In so doing, the Commission confirms that which forms the core of theodrama, namely, a genuine interplay between infinite and finite freedom (initiated by the God of Jesus Christ who “wishes to be loved by us in return”), which interplay is redeemed and consummated through the “economic” interplay between the Father and the incarnate Son (as a drama of God himself reaching its climax in the “suffering of ‘separation’”), even as the latter

⁷⁴³ ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 3, p. 212.

⁷⁴⁴ ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 2.2, p. 212.

⁷⁴⁵ ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 3, p. 212. Kasper notes his express agreement with Balthasar in remarking that the point of departure for any attempt to understand the “suffering” of an immutable God “can only be the testimony of the Bible and not some philosophy or other” such as “idealism with its conception of the necessary self-renunciation of the absolute, or modern process philosophy. We must therefore resist all attempts, anticipated long ago in gnosticism, to turn the cross of Christ into a world principle, a world law or a world formula or to explain it as a symbol of the universal principle of ‘dying and living again’ [*Stirb und Werde*].” Kasper, *GJC*, 194; see Balthasar, *MP*, 116.

⁷⁴⁶ See ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, B, 4.2, pp. 221 -22.

relationship, in its turn, is the sovereignly free prolongation of the eternal, “immanent” relationship between the generating Father and the begotten Son.⁷⁴⁷

Now what remains undeveloped and merely implicit in the ITC’s treatment (granted the abbreviated character of the document) is elaborated upon by Balthasar in a way that suggests that if the God of biblical revelation is both immutable and capable of being affected it is ultimately *because* God in himself is always the trinitarian Father. In our effort to bring this to light, we will draw together the modalities and aspects of the inner-divine Fatherhood that we have treated thus far, and apply them thematically toward the development of an understanding of the Father as the originless hypostatic principle of the unity of immutability and affectivity in God.

G.2. God is love: the unity of immutability and affectivity originating in the trinitarian Father

The “final problem” of theodramatic theory, we have already noted, entails finding a path between two concepts of God set at opposite extremes. Earlier we referred to these antithetical concepts in association with the positions taken by Arius and Hegel. Yet the respective notions of God advocated by Arius and Hegel are themselves representative of concepts that can be categorized more generally: namely, the mythological notion of God/gods (the Hegelian view falls under this category) and the philosophical notion of God (to which category Arius belongs).

At one extreme, there is the mythological view in which God (or the gods) is embroiled in the world drama, which, with its own laws of operation, thus constitutes a third level of reality above God and man; at the other extreme, God is seen dwelling in philosophical sublimity above the vicissitudes of the world, which prevent him from entering the dramatic action. On the basis of biblical revelation, we can say right at the outset that God has involved himself with the creation of the world, particularly in the creation of finite free beings, without thereby succumbing to some superordinate fate. Thus the God of theodramatic action is neither “mutable” (as in the mythological view) nor “immutable” (in terms of philosophy).

⁷⁴⁷ See ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, B, 5.2, p. 222.

We shall have to see, as the drama unfolds, how it is impossible for him to be either one or the other.⁷⁴⁸

Expressed positively, we shall have to see how it is possible for him to uphold the truth that lies at the core of the respective concepts, even as he surpasses these concepts in their dialectical opposition.

Balthasar affirms unambiguously that the “supreme balance” between the mythological and the philosophical notions of divinity is obtained, not by reason of the unfolding advancement of human speculation, but thanks to the full disclosure of the trinitarian God in the theodramatic action of the Incarnation.⁷⁴⁹ It suffices for us to contend, with Balthasar, only that

for the “incarnation of God” to be possible in a Christian sense, God must be able to come to our side without leaving his own “side”; but this opposition presupposes essentially that eternal opposition of which we spoke when considering the life of love within the Godhead....[The Son] goes not only into that which is “other” than himself, into the creature, but also into that which is contrary to himself as he gathers into himself the sin and the lostness and so the abandonment by God of his creature, and takes it upon himself. He does not thereby cease to be himself; indeed he shows precisely through this what he is in himself....The heart is pierced, its spring uncovered, water and blood pour forth [from the farthest depths of divine love, whose source is the Father].⁷⁵⁰

Elsewhere Balthasar observes that in virtue of the power which the Son exhibits in “identifying himself...with his complete opposite, God the Father recognizes the ‘equality of being’, the divinity of the one he has sent”.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁸ *TD* 2, 9. Similarly, in *TD* 1, 130, Balthasar inquires: “Where is the path that leads between the twin abysses of a systematics in which God, absolute Being, is only the Unmoved before whom the moving world plays out its drama, and a mythology which absorbs God into the world and makes him to be one of the warring parties of world process?” In addition, see “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 31-37.

⁷⁴⁹ See “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 39.

⁷⁵⁰ *Rdr*, 200 [=Klarstellungen, 45]. And *GL* 7, 215: “[I]f it is true that the coming to light of the inner-trinitarian mystery in the dispensation of salvation lets us see something of the law of the immanent Trinity[,] ...then we may argue that God could do what he did in reality do, and that this self-abasement and self-emptying were no contradiction of his own essence, but corresponded precisely to this essence, in a way that could never have been thought of.” See also *TD* IV, 83, as well as K. Barth, *KD*, IV/1, 185ff..

⁷⁵¹ *Rdr*, 171.

In a similar vein, Balthasar argues that “if it is possible for one Person in God to accept suffering to the extent of God-forsakenness, and to deem it his own, then evidently it is not something foreign to God, something that does not affect him. It must be something profoundly appropriate to his divine Person, for--to say it once again--his being sent (*missio*) by the Father is a modality of his proceeding (*processio*) from the Father.”⁷⁵²

It is not without significance that Balthasar concludes these passages by referring to the eternal event of the Son’s being begotten by the Father as the transcendental theological ground of the Son’s ability to enter into the “place” of, and to be affected therein by, another. Clearly the ITC concurs with this view when it affirms “a very close correspondence between the gift of divinity that the Father gives to the Son and the gift by which the Father consigns his Son to the abandonment of the Cross”.⁷⁵³ As regards “the gift of divinity” which the Son receives from the Father, we have previously shown it to be always already defined according to the “primal kenosis” (the generative self-emptying) of the Father. This assertion, established upon a theodramatic christology, is not simply a more or less interesting piece of speculation. Indeed it signifies that if the divine Son can enter into the world-drama as he who, made flesh, identifies himself with the condition of (God-estranged) creatures without losing himself, he does so *in function of his generation by the Father as the perfect reflection of the Father’s being*. It signifies, in other words, that “the Father is greater” as the archetypal and generative mode of being-divine [*Gottsein*] in such a way that self-being in inviolable integrity and being-for-another in boundless com-“passion” [*Mit-’lieden*] coincide.

⁷⁵² TD 3, 226. Consider, too, that “anthropologically this is not possible [that on the Cross Jesus changes place with sinners] if it is simply *some man or other* who suffers on others’ behalf: it is only possible if ‘*unus ex Trinitate passus est*’ both in his human nature and in his divine person. For it is only by virtue of his divine person that he can enter into the desperate situation of a free human being vis-à-vis God, in order to transform it from a dead-end to a situation full of hope.” TD 3, 239-40.

⁷⁵³ ITC, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), II, B, 5.2, p. 222.

Already, in light of these preliminary observations, we can see that the path toward resolving “the final problem” of theodramatic theory leads directly to a conception of the trinitarian Father as the originless hypostatic principle of the unity of immutability and affectivity in God. But before going further in the development of this conception, let us pause briefly to locate this path within the history of Christian theology.

Evidently the path taken by Balthasar passes through the conceptual terrain, to speak figuratively, of the Eastern theological tradition. Like the Greek Fathers, Balthasar accounts for the unity of the triune Godhead principally in virtue of the monarchy of the Father, insofar as the one identical divine essence possessed by the Son and the Spirit is communicated by the Father as from its archetypal mode and unoriginate hypostatic principle.⁷⁵⁴ But if Balthasar retrieves from Eastern trinitarian theology this dynamic, patrogenetic conception of the trinitarian God (considering it to be more reflective of God’s action in the history of salvation than is the Latin conception),⁷⁵⁵ he also renews this conceptual approach by inserting it into the interpretive framework of “a scripturally inspired ontology of inter-personal love”.⁷⁵⁶ As a result, while Balthasar follows the Cappadocian Fathers in refusing to conceive the divine essence as ever existing in a “naked” state

⁷⁵⁴ The conceptual approach of Eastern trinitarian theology begins with the Father as “the fontal principle of the consubstantial Triad”, and hence as the principle of its unity (E. Fortman, *op. cit.*, 76). It is the one God the Father who, in begetting the Son, gives to the Son the fullness of the divinity, so that the Son possesses the one identical divine being with the Father. The Holy Spirit, too, proceeds principally from the Father and receives the one divine being from the Father (through the Son). The creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople reflect the Eastern approach in starting with the one God and Father, and then confess the Son and the Spirit to be one in being or substance with the Father. On their part, the Latin Fathers characteristically view the common substance as the principle of unity. For an exposition of the distinct approaches taken by Greek and Latin trinitarian theology, see T. de Régnon, *op. cit.*, 335-40, 428-35; for an abbreviated overview, see W. Kasper, *GJC*, 259, 296-97.

⁷⁵⁵ For in the economy of salvation God acts, not as an undifferentiated essence vis-à-vis man, but premierly as Father, from whom proceed the Son and the Spirit in acting for us. To be sure, in their missions from the Father, the Son and the Spirit act as divine in essence, but according to their personal modes in relation to their ultimate origin in the Father. Divine activity in the history of salvation is ‘covenantal’ from the start, showing that God acts always as relational (being-for), and which relational activity proceeds originally from Father’s will and self-disposing. In the economy, it is the Father who is premierly the First and the Last (hence, the source of unity) inasmuch as it is his paternal will and kingdom that is to be accomplished; and in the end, when all has been subjected to the Son, the Son in turn will hand everything over to the Father, so that God [Father] will be all in all (see 1Cor 15:24-28).

without a hypostasis, that is, without “a mode of being”,⁷⁵⁷ he nonetheless advances well beyond their use of sub-personal, naturalistic images of the unoriginate hypostatic mode of divinity (the Father as torch, wellspring, sun)⁷⁵⁸ and even beyond the monological, intellectualistic notions of active generation⁷⁵⁹ to employ as an image of the patrogenetic dynamic in God the dialogical dynamic of inter-subjective *agape* as indicated by the I-Thou relationship between the Father and the incarnate Son.⁷⁶⁰

This is borne out when we compare the respective interpretations submitted by Basil and Balthasar of what is signified by calling the Son ‘Word’. For Basil, the Son is called ‘Word’ “so that it be clear that he proceeded from the mind...because he is the image of his Generator, showing in himself the entire Generator”.⁷⁶¹ What remains unclear in Basil’s proposal, however, is the Son’s *reciprocating* exercise of the divine nature vis-à-vis the generating Father which constitutes

⁷⁵⁶ As when addressing the question of predicating “receptivity” of God the Father, so here when dealing with the problem of the trinitarian Father’s “affectivity”, I am indebted to the work of G.F. O’Hanlon. See *op. cit.*, 129.

⁷⁵⁷ See Basil, *Epistulae*, 38, 2, PG 32:325ff.; and Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1, PG 45:337.

⁷⁵⁸ See, for example, Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Maced.*, 2, 5; and *Vita Moysis*, PG 44:405 BD. Balthasar’s remarks on the trinitarian imagery of Gregory can be found in *TD* IV, 67, n. 46; see in addition his *Présence et pensée: Essai sur la philosophia religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1942), 123-32.

⁷⁵⁹ See Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.*, 30.20; and Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Cat.* 1; these and other examples are cited by E. Fortman, *op. cit.*, 77.

⁷⁶⁰ Three points are worthy of mention here. First, as regards his use of human analogates as pointers to divine trinitarian love, Balthasar prefers the parent-child relationship as an instance of the I-Thou dynamic insofar as it is better able to indicate a patrogenetic dynamic. See his “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*; and *TL* II, 54-7.

Secondly, it merits repeating that Balthasar does not present the I-Thou model as a replacement of the one based on the interior unity of the spirit. Rather, he assures us: “As far as the ‘*imago Trinitatis*’ in the sphere of the spiritual creature is concerned, it can only be developed in two opposite lines of being and thought that point to each other. The one is the inner structure of the created spirit, which Augustine thoroughly explored;...[the other is the] movement from the ‘I’ to the ‘thou’ and to the fruit of this encounter....The creaturely image must be content to look in the direction of the mystery of God from its two starting points at the same time; the lines of perspective meet at an invisible point, in eternity”; *TD* 3, 525-26. J. Ratzinger agrees; see his remarks on the “law of complementarity” in regard to trinitarian doctrine, in *Intro.*, 123-24.

And thirdly, as we mentioned earlier, the I-Thou model itself affords a possible synthesis of the theological concerns of both the Western/Latin and Eastern/Greek traditions. If we take as our point of departure for a Christian doctrine of God the fact that God is revealed to be love through his sending of his only Son (see 1Jn 4:7f.), we can say that inasmuch as love is the activity that constitutes the divine substance, as a point of departure it can be rendered compatible with the Latin approach. Yet inasmuch as the divine love made manifest in salvation history is primarily paternal (God as sending his Son), it indicates at the same time--and not as conceptually subsequent--the Person of the Father who cannot be the primal Lover except in an eternal relationship with the Absolute Beloved in the Spirit of their common love (and thus we are simultaneously in accord with the Greek approach). For an elaboration of this argument, see Kasper’s *GJC*, 243-44.

him as the Word and Image of his Generator (see Jn 1:1,18; 5:19-20; 14:9-11, 31; 15:9).⁷⁶² Balthasar makes it his aim to offer a more adequate understanding of the eternal procession of the Son-Word by simultaneously reaching back to the Johannine notion of God as love and forward to the contributions made by the “philosophers of dialogue” (within modern personalist philosophy), keeping his focus all the while upon the mutual self-giving intrinsic to the nature of trinitarian love. Consequently, what enters Balthasar’s purview is that the Father, as the self-communicating source of the infinite freedom which trinitarian love presupposes, in generating leaves [*lässt*] the Son his own filial mode of knowledge and decision,⁷⁶³ albeit as codetermined by the paternal mode from which the Son proceeds in the unity of essence. For Balthasar, then, that the Son is called ‘Word’ identifies him as the second party, if you will, the *Ant-Wort* in “the inner-trinitarian conversation”.⁷⁶⁴ “Insofar as he is God”, states Balthasar, “he is eternal, infinite freedom; insofar as he is the Son of the Father, he is this freedom in the mode (*tropos*) of readiness, receptivity,...and hence of appropriate response [*Entsprechung*]: that is, he is the Father’s Word, image and expression.”⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶¹ Basil, *Hom.*, 16.3, cited by E. Fortman, *op. cit.*, 77. In *Contra Eunomium*, 6.16-17, Basil compares the generation of the Word to the birth of an idea that co-exists with the movement of the mind without temporal delay.

⁷⁶² To Balthasar’s mind, “the reason why the *Filioque* could never find a home in the Greek Church” is probably because “a view of the Holy Spirit that posits the Spirit as the substantial love ‘between’ Father and Son contradicts too openly the first conceptual schema of Platonism”. An indication of the “hypnotic power” of Plotinian and neo-Platonic doctrine “is the fact that, in spite of constantly repeated assurances to the contrary, the schema of descent was not all that far from the dogmatics of the Trinity, even in post-Nicene theology. Although now the abstract and formal statements of the Trinity are correct, the schema of descent stands before the vision of Greek theology.” “*PSW*”, 87.

⁷⁶³ In *TD IV*, 445, Balthasar writes about “die dreieinige göttliche Freiheit, die innerhalb ihrer Einheit jeder Hypostase ihre eigene Sicht- und Entscheidungsweise belässt”. Even as regards this perspective, it can be said that Balthasar is retrieving and updating the Greek tradition of trinitarian doctrine, since as E. Fortman points out (*op. cit.*, 75-83), Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Cyril of Alexandria, among others (we could add Richard of St. Victor in the West) admit that in the Father’s act of generating he wills the Son “concurrently” with his knowing the Son.” See Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 8, 2.

⁷⁶⁴ *Rdr*, 140.

⁷⁶⁵ *TD 2*, 267. We have retained G. Harrison’s translation of the term “*Entsprechung*” to read “appropriate response” since it conveys the essential point: viz., the Son’s mode of self-disposing in correspondence to that of the Father. See *TD II/1*, 242.

More yet is involved in the revision which Balthasar works upon the patrogenetic conception of the trinitarian Godhead propounded by the Greek Fathers. We have seen, just above, that by inserting their conceptual approach into the (scripturally inspired) interpretive framework of inter-subjective ontology, Balthasar renders more readily apprehensible that in God the eternally actual generation is constituted by the reciprocal movement of the Father and the Son toward one another: movement as mutual self-surrender according to the nonreversible order of the procession and in respect of the incommunicable exercise by the different Persons of the one divine nature. But of even greater theological import, perhaps, in what concerns the ongoing development of a doctrine of God the Father is the elucidation Balthasar brings to the generative efficacy of the Father's "mode of being". We are speaking here of the power inherent to the archetypal (paternal) mode of love to beget perfectly reciprocating (filial) love, the power, that is, of the Father-Lover to engender the "readiness, receptivity, and appropriate response" of infinite freedom which *is* the Son. To be sure, this component of the patrogenetic dynamic in God has been accorded a central place and undergone a consistent thematic treatment throughout our study; and it cannot be otherwise in the context of the present inquiry.

The elucidation Balthasar provides is clearly founded on the Johannine account of the dynamic entailed in God's work of "begetting" (see Jn 1:1,18; 5:19-20; 14:9-11; 15:9; 1Jn 2:5-6,14,29-3:2,9-10; 4:7-19). More precisely, it is governed by the Johannine conception of the interrelation between knowing God and being begotten of God.

Balthasar not only revives this Johannine insight within trinitarian theology but renovates it, so to speak, enhances its intelligibility by way of applying a "metaphysic of charity", as we noted before. Inasmuch as charity (which denotes tending toward the other) is the perfect act of the person and hence also of freedom, this metaphysics uses more developed categories of self-movement/⁴ disposing and relationality in granting person a certain primacy over substance. In

consequence, the substance-based metaphysics which characterized the classical philosophy of being, as well as the theology constructed therewith, undergo some modification.⁷⁶⁶ More to the point: what call for modification are conceptions of the evocative power of God which are influenced principally by classical philosophical theology.

Let us consider in the first place the philosophical idea of the Unmoved Mover. According to this idea, although “the One”, the divine absolute, cannot itself be an “I” who turns toward a “Thou” in love, nonetheless it cannot cease to be the object of love toward which every creature is drawn. In this schema, “elicited” love signals what can only be a one-way movement: the world, on its side, is carried along in movement by *eros* for the Absolute (in respect of its goodness, truth, and beauty), an advance that can only mean for the creature a definitive de-personalizing absorption into the One which, on its side, remains impersonally detached.⁷⁶⁷

Prompted by the love of God appearing in Christ, Christianity has always understood the drawing power of God to entail a vastly different dynamic, even as the Christian (and, behind it, the biblical) conception can respectfully acknowledge the creature’s philosophical love for the One of absolute goodness, truth, and beauty.⁷⁶⁸ It is a case of God’s free self-disclosure wherein the form

⁷⁶⁶ “In ancient philosophy substance in general was at the center of things, but here [inasmuch as ‘the mystery of God and man is shown to the world as the mystery of love’] the center is a ‘metaphysic of charity’, namely, the person, whose most perfect act is the act of charity.” *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, D, 3, p. 214. In addition, see G.F. O’Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 135.

⁷⁶⁷ See “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*, 34.

⁷⁶⁸ Within this first volume of his theological aesthetics, Balthasar discusses at some length the difference between philosophical love and Christian love. Among numerous passages we offer the following: “The act of faith fulfills and surpasses the philosophic act...[for] when Being is confronted as love the threat which infinity poses to finitude vanishes. In his incarnation God has taken this threat into himself. The finite spirit’s giving of itself into the abyss of this love, *because it lives from this same love*, is indeed a renunciation of all finite securities—even spiritual ones—but it occurs within that handing over of self which is free from anxiety regarding its destiny in God” [*ibid.*, 159; emphasis mine]. Thomas Aquinas portrays “the philosophical love of the creature for God...as an ontological gravitational pull like that of the part for the whole or of the finite for the infinite. Outside Christianity there is no way of understanding how this supremacy of the whole does not necessarily entail the shattering of finite form through an act by which personal consciousness surrenders and sacrifices itself like a drop that is lost in the ocean of Nirvana. The level of love we allude to can only be that of Christian love, which is founded on Christ’s hypostatic union....In this manner, the philosophical act of intellectual-ecstatic *eros* that Plotinus directs to Primal Being is fulfilled in the Christian act of love by being elevated and incorporated into the Trinity’s Being-as-Love” (*ibid.*, 193). See also the entire work, *LA*.

(the manner of God's self-giving) cannot be separated from the content (absolute being).⁷⁶⁹ In beholding the form of revelation, the creature is moved--not without grace--to a genuine *ekstasis* of love by way of conducting him-/herself "just as he did" (1 Jn 2:6; see 3:16; 4:16,19).⁷⁷⁰ This divinely initiated evocation of the creature's mirroring self-surrender, moreover, is not limited to the moral order but is identified with the ontological order: in view of the self-revelatory nature of God's words and deeds, to see/behold God, to know God, and to love as God loves is in effect to be begotten of God as his image (see 1 Jn 3:2-3; 4:7-12).

Balthasar, following John's lead, traces the generative, evocative power of the self-communicating God back to the mystery of the trinitarian Father. The incarnate Son's self-giving-over "to the end" is an epiphany in which the love of the Father (for the Son and for the world) is made manifest (see Jn 3:16, 5:19-20; 14:9-11; 15:9; 1:1,18). Looking upon the form of the Crucified in faith "imparts a delight impossible to repress" which signifies "that the *form*--the fashion and manner--in which God is perfect [is absolute self-subsistent being] *is itself perfect*, is perfect form" (see Jn 8:28; 12:28,31-32); indeed, it indicates that "the eternal Son, already within the Trinity, represents God's beauty in a particular manner" and as such is the begotten "image of the Father".⁷⁷¹

Balthasar, of course, is well aware that it is possible to speak of the transcendental properties of the divine substance (absolute goodness, truth, and beauty), and all the while to exclude from consideration the trinitarian processions within the Godhead. But for Balthasar (and this is *the* overruling concern of his theological trilogy), to regard the transcendental properties of absolute being solely from this vantage point results in an insufficiently *Christian* conception of

⁷⁶⁹ See *GL* 1, 55.

⁷⁷⁰ See *GL* 1, 217.

God's goodness, truth, and beauty and hence, concomitantly, of the power of God to draw all things to himself (see Jn 12:28,31-32). To achieve an adequately Christian conception, Balthasar directs us to ponder that what constitutes the transcendental properties of God is identical with the tri-personal event of absolute, self-surrendering love that has its origin in the hypostasis of the Father. This means that the transcendental properties of God are originatively determined by the mode of being proper to the Father, that is, by the manner in which the Father disposes of the divine nature, and that consequently, the Son's mode of being-divine [*Gottsein*]-divinely good, true, and beautiful--proceeds from, is engendered by, and reflects the way in which the Father is God. In fine, what Balthasar wants to emphasize is that the efficacy of the Father's act of begetting his Son and Image is to be accounted for not merely in respect to the transcendentals predicated of the divine (undifferentiated) substance, nor even in respect to power predicated likewise (power as conceived in treatises *De Deo Uno*), but also, indeed primarily, in respect to *how* the Father disposes of the divinity. For if the Son, in eternal simultaneity, comes forth from the Father and returns as "drawn" in love to him, it is because, within God, content (divine nature) cannot be separated from form (absolute self-disposing, in the manner of self-handing over without reserve).⁷⁷²

Now when, from this standpoint, we pick up again with Balthasar's reasoning that if the divine Son can enter into the "place" of humanity and take its God-estranged condition upon himself without thereby losing himself, and if by giving himself in precisely this manner the Son

⁷⁷¹ *GL* 1, 55; emphasis Balthasar's. And *ibid.*, 11: "[T]he pulchrum [the beauty of God]...is the manner in which God's goodness (*bonum*) gives itself and is expressed by God and understood by man as the truth (*verum*)." See also *ibid.*, 195, 218, 234-35.

⁷⁷² With respect to the *ad intra* activity of the triune Godhead, there is an identity of freedom and necessity: this activity is of its nature necessary and absolute in constituting what God is (God wills to be what God is), yet nevertheless is identical with absolute self-possession and self-disposing (God is what he wills to be). Hence in what concerns the *ad intra* trinitarian processions, absolute self-disposing unfolds in terms of a necessary will originating in the Father and reigning hierarchically in the freedom of the divine Persons. See *TD* IV, 57-58, 76 and *TD* 2, 255-59. Within the present study see chapter II, E.2. - E.2.2., where we spelled out the "economic" grounds for this stance.

shows us the Father whose “place” of paternal self-emptying is in the One he sends,⁷⁷³ then what comes into view is a conception of the evocative power of the Father’s mode of being divine than which nothing greater can be conceived. For not only does the God and Father of Jesus Christ draw his free creatures to himself (one with his begetting them as his sons in the Son) in such a way that creaturely freedom as such is preserved from final annihilation, but it can also be said that the Father calls forth the (filial) answer of self-surrender by virtue of his being divine in such a way that he allows himself to be affected by the freedom that he himself posits in relation to himself.

“The Father who dwells in me does his works” (Jn 14:10). The footwashing, which these words accompany, is already past, that act of perfect self-surrender on Jesus’ part, kneeling down before his disciples to wash the dirt from their feet, to take it upon himself....The footwashing, too, is a work designed to reveal the Father’s heart; it does so, most effectively. God is like this, says the Son, as he carries out these actions.⁷⁷⁴

This is to affirm by implication that an unoriginated modality of affectivity is integral to the evocative efficacy of the Father’s act of begetting (both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, granted the abyss between necessity and contingency that marks the respective orders).⁷⁷⁵ Moreover, we have here no simple regression to a mythological image of divinity, since, in Balthasar’s understanding, affectivity is among the modalities of the perfect form (the manner of self-disposing) in which God is perfect (is immutably the pure act of absolute being) as Father.⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷³ See Jn 1:18; 5:19-20; 8:28-29; 10:37-38; 14:9-11,21-24; 15:9; 16:32. In *TD* 4, 332, Balthasar writes: “The second [biblical, soteriological] motif, the *commercium*, is now firmly based on the first, that is, *the Son’s self-surrender*, insofar as the latter is the ‘economic’ representation of *the Father’s trinitarian, loving self-surrender*.” Emphasis Balthasar’s.

⁷⁷⁴ *YCY*, 101-102. Balthasar expresses essentially the same insight in his *Theodramatik* as follows: “What is provocative in Jesus’ message is that he manifests the glory of divine power in lowliness, defenselessness and a self-surrender that goes to the lengths of the eucharistic Cross....This unveils a totally unexpected picture of God’s internal, trinitarian defenselessness....Only thus can the Son really reveal the Father....Truth is unreserved self-surrender and hence the opening-up of the depths of the Father. Truth is the Son’s humility, which makes room for, and expresses, the whole sublimity of the Father’s love.” *TD* 4, 450. See also *ibid.*, 330-1; and *TD* 2, 180.

⁷⁷⁵ For all contingent events take place at the heart of the dynamic of the inner-divine processions. See *TD* IV, 221.

⁷⁷⁶ See *GL* 1, 55.

Concerning the question of whether we dare hope that the Father's love in Christ, the Pierced and Forsaken One, may prove effective in drawing forth an assent from every human being, we will postpone a discussion of Balthasar's inquiry into the matter until our final excursus. But already we can suggest that the ultimate foundation of Balthasar's hope in the prospect of universal salvation rests upon the evocative, generative efficacy of the God who shows his omnipotence in powerlessness and his immutability in love's affectivity as he enters the "place" (according to his trinitarian mystery) of the godless.

For the moment, let us remain within the inner-trinitarian realm. We have seen that the path toward resolving "the final problem" of theodramatic theory leads directly to a conception of the trinitarian Father as the unoriginate hypostatic mode of infinite freedom in whose generative self-disposing immutability and affectivity coincide. A summary argument of Balthasar's position could read thus: "The God of theodramatic action", we have quoted Balthasar as saying, "is neither 'mutable' (as in the mythological view) nor 'immutable' (in terms of philosophy)". It must be possible for him to be God in such a way that he can deign to "involve himself" in the destiny of his free creatures "without succumbing to some superordinate fate".⁷⁷⁷ The roots of this possibility may be traced back to the inner-divine Fatherhood of God, inasmuch as it is the Father's generative kenosis which primally determines the "infinitely determined super-form" (the "such a way" in which God exists) that constitutes the divine essence.⁷⁷⁸ Indeed upon closer look, the "such a way"

⁷⁷⁷ *TD* 2, 9.

⁷⁷⁸ *GL* 1, 432. Indeed, the Father's kenosis "is not 'act without image'", but on the contrary, is love that produces "image and bestows shape absolutely". On the "super-form" within the Godhead, see also *GL* 7, 17 and 22. Outside his theological aesthetics Balthasar expresses the idea thus: "We shall never know how to express the abyss-like depths of the Father's self-giving...[which is] an eternal 'super-Kenosis'....Everything that can be thought and imagined where God is concerned is, in advance, included and transcended in this self-destitution which constitutes the Person of the Father, and, at the same time, those of the Son and the Spirit"; *MP*, viii. "[Within God there is] a first 'kenosis' of the Father, expropriating himself by 'generating' the consubstantial Son....[Accordingly,] the Son could not be consubstantial with the Father except by self-expropriation; and their 'We', that is, the Spirit,...does not want anything 'for himself' but, as his revelation in the world shows, wants simply to be the pure manifestation and communication of the love between Father and Son (Jn 14:26; 16:13-15)"; *TD* 4, 331. And *ibid.*, 323: "[T]he Father's

in which the Father is God embraces, on the one hand, his delivering over the divine essence (and therewith his Paternity) to the Son's mode of infinite freedom without, on the other hand, his ceasing in himself to be God or forfeiting the determinative power of his archetypal mode of absolute being⁷⁷⁹--thus grounding the truth that lies respectively at the core of the mythological and philosophical notions of divinity.

The foregoing observation represents just one among several ways in which the mystery of the Father as the originless hypostatic principle of the unity of immutability and affectivity in God can be elucidated. For virtually every explanatory notion which we have used (following Balthasar) to illuminate the mystery of God's Fatherhood, particularly those taken from a scripturally inspired ontology of inter-personal love, can be understood as indicating in some respect the unity of immutability and affectivity originating in the primal kenosis of the Father. It suffices to consider only the following in outline.

- * *the unity of immutability and affectivity*
- * the unity of self-possession and self-expropriation
- * the unity of self-being in inviolable integrity and being-for-another in boundless com-"passion"
- * the unity of distance in personal distinction and intimate mutual indwelling [*perichoresis*]
- * the unity of self-constitution and self-renunciation/-abandonment [*Selbst-verzicht/-losigkeit*]
- * the unity of self-communication and self-differentiation/-limitation
- * the unity of self-disposing and allowing himself to be disposed of

self-utterance in the generation of the Son is an initial 'kenosis' within the Godhead that underpins all subsequent kenosis."

⁷⁷⁹ We are reminded that what the Father does is nothing other than to beget this "appropriate response" constitutive of the Son, the appropriateness of which is determined by the Father's archetypal generative mode of divine intellection and volition. The German original of TD3, 39, refers to the Son as the One entirely disposed of [*der Allverfügte*] in relation to the Father who is the All-disposing One [*der Allverfügende*]. Although this passage deals explicitly with the economic Trinity, the latter is precisely the ultimate basis upon which we can make affirmations about the immanent Trinity. Elsewhere, when referring expressly to the mystery of the "immanent" generation, Balthasar states: "the Son, in being begotten, leaves 'the Father the entirety of his necessary will [*Nezessitätswille*],...in

- * the unity of determining and leaving free the other to a codeterminative role
- * the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness
- * the unity of initiatory self-giving and receptivity, expectation, dependence

The modalities and aspects of the Fatherhood of God included here are familiar to us by now, since they have already been dealt with in the process of constructing Part Two of our study. They have been drawn from Balthasar's few direct thematic treatments of the "suffering" of an immutable God,⁷⁸⁰ but also from his more indirect references within the context of his theodramatic theory. So close is the correlation between the pairs of concepts listed above and the unity of immutability and affectivity in regard to the generating Father that we run the risk of repeating Part Two in its entirety should we undertake to expound upon each correlation in turn.⁷⁸¹

There is, however, one concept in particular that is given special emphasis by Balthasar; it is referred to (albeit only indirectly at times) whenever he ponders the mystery of divine affectivity in light of Christological revelation. We are speaking of the concept of the trinitarian *perichoresis* (*circumincessio*), "the unimaginable intimacy between Father and Son, the way they exist in one another and indwell each other".⁷⁸² Granted Balthasar's insight that an unoriginated modality of affectivity is integral to the evocative efficacy of the Father's act of begetting (his only Son, and we as sons by adoption), we can raise the question whether and how Balthasar's conception of the *perichoresis* serves to advance this perspective.

no way interposing his begotten will as if to determine somehow his own formation'." *TD IV*, 76. Balthasar is quoting A. von Speyr, *Die Welt des Gebetes*, 59. My translation. See also *TD 4*, 329-30.

⁷⁸⁰ See *TD 4*, 319-51 and *TD IV*, 191-222.

⁷⁸¹ Consider, for example, the correlation that comes to light when the first pair is regarded in reference to the unity of immutability and affectivity in the Father. The Father, as Balthasar says, *is* the unoriginated movement of self-giving that holds nothing back of what it is to be God in generating the consubstantial Son. This paternal movement constitutes a unity of unreserved self-expropriation in surrendering all to another *and* absolute ontic integrity in acting out of infinite self-possession and self-disposal as the primal hypostatic mode of divinity. For God is always Father and the Father is always "God" (that is, the divine substance) only in this handing over of everything in favor of the Son.

⁷⁸² YCY, 101. See Balthasar's reflections in *TD 3*, 506-7, 529-35; and *TD IV*, 230-1, 267, 275, 286, 329, 442-44, 450-51.

Regarding Balthasar's approach: insofar as the issue of divine "suffering" presents itself in view of the kenotic event of the Son's incarnation, an avenue opens up which permits Balthasar's thought to move from his "kenosis"-based christology/trinitarian theology to an interpretation of the doctrine of *perichoresis* and forward still to an understanding the affectivity of the trinitarian Father as Primal Lover.

G.3. Trinitarian *perichoresis* and the generative efficacy of paternal affectivity

Balthasar is not alone among contemporary theologians in centering his approach to the doctrine of the trinitarian *perichoresis* on the concept of kenosis, which is to say in the next breath, on the concept of the "exchange of places".⁷⁸³ According to Leo Scheffczyk, the concept of the "exchange of place" characterizes the self-abandonment [*Selbstpreisgabe*] of each divine person for the sake of the others. For the pure act of tri-Personal love "by its very nature means giving of self to the other, going out of oneself to pass over into the other", so that already here in the intra-trinitarian realm there is "something like an exchange of places between the self and the other....Even the Trinity exists only by virtue of and within the reciprocal self-surrender of persons: and this surrender of self with one's whole being is like stepping into the place of the other" as an act constitutive of both oneself and the other.⁷⁸⁴

Norbert Hoffmann agrees with Scheffczyk's reflections and adds that, with respect to the trinity of persons in God, the "stepping into the place of the other" occurs in so radical a manner

⁷⁸³ It is beyond the scope of our study to discuss at length the various reasons which would account for this shift in approach to trinitarian doctrine. But it has been described by Anne Hunt as "a shift in starting point from metaphysical system to biblical narrative....In classical Latin trinitarian theology, a philosophically-fashioned consideration of the unity and perfections of God's being precedes an explication of the mystery of the Trinity. In contrast,...[Balthasar] returns to the biblical narrative as primary source with the express intention of giving primacy to the data." A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 134.

⁷⁸⁴ Leo Scheffczyk, "'Stellvertretung' und Sendung des Priesters", in Scheffczyk, ed., *Glaube als Lebensinspiration: Gessammelte Schriften zur Theologie*, Horizonte, Neue Folge 18 (Einsiedeln, 1980), 413-25, here p. 418.

that one person can be said to be the “locus” of another.⁷⁸⁵ Hoffmann’s elaboration of this point is confined to the relationship between the Father and the Son. In the manner of active generation, “the Father *is* only as movement toward the Son (*relatio subsistens*)”, for the sake of whom the Father opens up and establishes the “ontic space” (Balthasar prefers to say, the “acting area”) proper to the second Person.⁷⁸⁶ In the manner of being generated, the Son *is* only as movement from and to the Father. “Beyond their reciprocal being-in-one-another formally rooted in their identity of substance”, Hoffmann writes, “there also exists for Father and Son a relational immanence, a correlative inclusion of one in the other.”⁷⁸⁷ The Son can be considered the locus of the Father inasmuch as the Son is the term of the relation of Paternity which the Father *is*; as the generating principle the Father is in the locus of the one whom he generates. With relative variation, the Son as the one generated is in the locus of the Father, the generating wellspring.⁷⁸⁸ Balthasar, it seems to us, would agree with Hoffmann that the doctrine of the trinitarian *perichoresis* (*circumincessio*) “has not by far been explored and made to bear fruit in the manner it deserves”,⁷⁸⁹ even though Hoffmann’s own treatment neither throws sufficient light on the theodramatic features of the *perichoresis* nor advances far enough into the issue of the affectivity of God the Father.

In Balthasar’s thought the doctrine of the trinitarian *perichoresis* obtains an interpretation that accentuates its inherently theodramatic character. For Balthasar, the affirmation that the Son is the locus of divine Fatherhood calls for casting light on the interplay of infinite freedom occurring therein. God the Father, who *is* the relation of divine Paternity, is in the Son as the originless mode of self-handing-over to, and allowing himself to be affected by, the Son’s exercise of infinite

⁷⁸⁵ N. Hoffmann, “Trinity and the Cross”, 252-53.

⁷⁸⁶ N. Hoffmann, “Trinity and the Cross”, 251.

⁷⁸⁷ N. Hoffmann, “Trinity and the Cross”, 252. See Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I, q. 42, a. 5 c and ad 3.

⁷⁸⁸ N. Hoffmann, “Trinity and the Cross”, 251-52.

freedom. To be sure, far from losing himself in leaving his Paternity with the Son, the Father perfectly possesses himself in this unoriginated abandoning of self, and which act is necessarily generative of the corresponding self-abandonment that constitutes the Son.⁷⁹⁰ Thus, Balthasar asserts that the Father who surrenders his Paternity to the Son finds himself in the Son, finds himself (we have said it before) not as a static deposit but as the infinitely vital and archetypal source of the consubstantial love which the Son is reciprocally. Yet it is equally true that the Father finds in the locus of the Son the eternal and infinite fulfillment of his expectation--and hence finds therein his joy, his bliss--as the Primal Lover. All of this implies, Balthasar reminds us, “that the hypostases do not possess the divine nature in common like an untouchable treasure; rather, the divine nature is defined through and through by the modes of divine being”. And on this account, the trinitarian *perichoresis* involves “the joys of expectation...and fulfillment, the joys of giving and receiving, and the even deeper joys of finding oneself in the other and of being constantly over-fulfilled by him”.⁷⁹¹

Previously in our study, we have discussed Balthasar’s position that the modalities of self-determined powerlessness, dependence, and expectation are intrinsic to the generative efficacy of the Father’s mode of love in begetting the Son as his imaging counterpart.. Just now, we have expressly understood these modalities as specifying the affectivity of the trinitarian Father, and we

⁷⁸⁹ N. Hoffmann, “Trinity and the Cross”, 251.

⁷⁹⁰ We have argued in our previous sections that inasmuch as the Father’s act of self-giving begets the corresponding act of self-surrender that is the Son, the Father allows [*lässt*] a distinct hypostatic mode of infinite freedom over against himself (see *TD* 4, 329-30). Since, moreover, the Father’s begetting the Son as his reciprocating Beloved constitutes his divine Paternity, that the Father leaves-free the Son over against his act of generating therefore means that the Father allows the Son to let him be Father. In this respect “the Father owes his Fatherhood to the Son who lets himself be generated” (*TD* IV, 221). Thus Balthasar maintains that “the responsive love of the Son continue[s] eternally to affect the very act of generation that is the eternal Source of all” (*WEL*, 16). The Father’s mode of being divine, then, exhibits the ability to allow the Other to co-determine the event of mutual love (constitutive of the divine essence) such that in the Father initiatory, originative power and the power to allow himself to be affected coincide.

⁷⁹¹ *TD* 2, 258. See also G.F. O’Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 122. God’s immutability is nonetheless maintained, for since the divine essence does not possess its Being as a fourth subsistence “alongside” the three persons but is itself constituted by the movement of giving and receiving among the persons, it follows that integral to the *unchanging*

have done so in a way that serves to underscore the theodramatic character of Balthasar's conception of *perichoresis*. These steps enable us to apprehend with some specification the Father's disposition of affectivity precisely in respect of its power to elicit the "appropriate response" [*Entsprechung*].

But while the modalities of paternal powerlessness, dependence, and expectation specify the Father's affectivity in terms of what Balthasar calls the "at stake-ness" of the Father (in leaving his Paternity with the Son, the generative power of which is shown in the Son's ability to respond with the readiness to place himself "at stake" in leaving his Sonship with the Father both as regards his eternal procession and temporal mission: see III, D.2), there is another angle of specificity to be considered which can be designated the boundless com-"passion" [*Mit-leiden*] of the Father. And to this we now turn our attention.

The premiere kenosis of the Father is like a "stepping into the other's place" so as to "embrace as his own the experience which is the beloved's". "The lover"--and the Father is such archetypally--"does not wish to 'have his own' experience, but to have it only *in the beloved*."⁷⁹² Granted the ontological difference between infinite and finite freedom,⁷⁹³ as the Primal Lover the Father is the generating source of the filial "place" (the "acting area" proper to the Son's mode of infinite freedom) into which he "steps". Yet he "steps" therein as one who displays the readiness to be affected by, out of his wish to identify himself with, his Beloved's mode of being-divine. What is more, since the generating Father is himself the "place" in which the Son originates, it can be said conversely that the Father-Lover "renounces what is his own and desires to clear all available

essence of the triune God is "the interchange of the divine essence among its three different bearers". Inner citation is from L. Scheffczyk, "Stellvertretung", 418.

⁷⁹² *GL* 1, 258. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁹³ We cannot cease from stressing that while Balthasar employs the analogue of human inter-personal love as a pointer to divine trinitarian love, he upholds the ontological difference between infinite and finite freedom and never tires of acknowledging in his treatment the *via negationis* (the ever greater dissimilarities) as well as the *via eminentiae*

space *within himself* for the beloved”.⁷⁹⁴ The Father, in other words, by “stepping into the other’s place” initiates an “exchange of places”, so to speak, vis-à-vis the Son.

Now this “exchange of places” (or reciprocal “stepping into the other’s place”), inasmuch as it constitutes the divine essence, can be further elucidated according to Balthasar’s patrogenetic conception of the Trinity. Indeed, the interior logic of Balthasar’s kenosis-based trinitarian theology/christology calls for it. If the efficacy of the Father’s act of begetting his Son and Image is accounted for primarily in respect to *how* the Father disposes of the divine Being, then we can consider the Father’s stepping into the Beloved’s place with the com-”passion” of love as integral to eliciting the Son’s doing likewise. This permits us yet another formulation of the paternal kenosis: it is by virtue of the Father who is God “*in such a way* that in his act of generation” he enters into the Son’s “place” and wills to experience his Fatherhood only in the Beloved, without leaving his own “place” or ceasing to be himself--since in his act of generating, the Father retains the absolute integrity of his distinct Person in the fullness of the divine substance--that “the Son, as the perfectly responding image of the Father, *likewise can*” step into the “place” of sinful humankind and wish to “have his experience” of Sonship but only therein and for their sake, without leaving his own “place” in the bosom of the Father or ceasing to be the infinitely distinct only begotten (see Jn 1:18).⁷⁹⁵ Consequently, we are right in step with Balthasar’s development of a theodramatic theory when we maintain that to look upon the Son’s “readiness to be affected by the inner constitution of his fellow humans” is to see therein the generative affectivity of the eternal

(the transcendence of the trinitarian *Urbild* over the human *Abbild*). See G.F. O’Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 117, 123. In addition see Balthasar, “Bewegung zu Gott”, *op. cit.*; and *TL* II, 54-7.

⁷⁹⁴ *GL* 1, 258. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁹⁵ This statement reformulates the following passage so as to render explicit the com-”passion” intrinsic to the kenosis of the Primal Lover: “The divine Father is actually the inexhaustible, externally flowing source of the divinity, but yet *in such a way* that in his paternal act of generation he keeps nothing of the divinity back for himself, nothing that he has not always entrusted to the Son, *which is why* the Son, as the perfectly responding image of the Father, *likewise can* keep nothing back for himself that he does not gratefully and willingly offer back to the Father.” *Rdr*, 180; emphasis mine. Alongside this passage we have Balthasar’s assertion that the premiere kenosis of the Father

Father.⁷⁹⁶ God the Father is like this, says the Son, as he carries out the “superaction” of his suffering and dying in entering into solidarity with the sin-conditioned fate of human beings.⁷⁹⁷ (As noted earlier, we will treat at some length in our concluding excursus Balthasar’s understanding of the power of the Son’s revelatory, “exegetical” representation of the Father (Jn 1:18) to draw forth from created freedom a *fiat* which accords to the Father the “place” he claims for his Fatherhood of grace.)

To be sure, by no means is Balthasar claiming that there is a direct parallel between the kenotic intra-trinitarian life wherein the Father “steps into the place” of the Son out of unoriginated boundless com-”passion” and the Son’s atoning representation of sinners. The Father does not dwell in the Son’s “place” to exercise the divine nature therein “instead of” the Logos, as if accomplishing for the Logos what is proper to the begotten mode of divinity. Balthasar agrees with N. Hoffmann that the Son’s assuming our “place” before the Father in the eschatological event of judgment “would have no direct analogy in the intra-trinitarian realm but finds there only the presupposition which provides its very ground and possibility”.⁷⁹⁸

Nevertheless, insofar as we can say that from eternity the Father delivers over himself in delivering over his Son to follow humanity into its sin-conditioned state of estrangement,⁷⁹⁹ it must be possible to speak of an economic modality of the Father’s com-”passion” vis-à-vis his incarnate Son. Indeed when Balthasar does so, he is led to stress the distinction between the economic

“expands [*ad intra*] to a kenosis involving the whole Trinity” and “makes possible [*ad extra*] all other kenotic movements of God into the world”; *TD* 4, 331. See also *ibid.*, 323.

⁷⁹⁶ See *TD* 3, 178. K. Barth concurs: “This paternal compassion of God [*väterliche Mitleiden Gottes*] is the primal mystery, the ground of the Son’s abasement”; *KD*, IV/2, 399; my translation.

⁷⁹⁷ Christ’s love attains its supreme action in the passion: see *TD* 3, 113; *TD* IV, 229; and *YCY*, 102.

⁷⁹⁸ N. Hoffmann, “Trinity and the Cross”, 257. See Balthasar, *TD* 4, 333-34.

⁷⁹⁹ Balthasar argues that “the event of the incarnation of the Second Person does not leave the inter-relationship of those divine Persons unaffected...[for] the eternal relations of Father and Son are focused, during the ‘time’ of Christ’s earthly wanderings, and in a sense which must be taken with full seriousness, in the relations between the man Jesus and his heavenly Father”; *MP*, 30. Elsewhere, in *GL* 6, 114, he states: “the [theodramatic] action is enveloped by a God who not only remains a spectator of the play, in order afterwards to reward or punish, but a God

extension of the kenoses of the Father and the Son. “[B]ehind the *fiat* of the Son to the will of the Father”, Balthasar observes,

stands the heart of the Father who allows the Son to go into the total abandonment [of the Cross]....John accompanies the beloved Master to the Cross and understands that he too, like the Father, must accept beforehand, as one who loves, the suffering of the beloved. Here it is no longer a question of bearing the suffering, but of letting it be borne....[T]he loving disciples are required for their part to agree to the hiatus: “If you loved me, you would rejoice that I go to the Father” (Jn 14:28), on the only road that leads thither: the way of the Cross. “If you loved me”: and so it is not the sinner who rejoices that one other than himself takes away from him his burden...for that would not be love. It is the lover who rejoices that the beloved suffers: not because suffering would be a joy, but because suffering is an expression of his love, which could not have expressed its ultimacy in any other way (Jn 15:13). And the beloved rejoices that he is permitted to do this.⁸⁰⁰

If it is the Father-Lover “who rejoices that one other than himself takes away” from his creatures the burden of their sin, it is because there is joy in his glorifying the incommunicable mode of divine being rendered incarnate “*pro nobis*” (Jn 12:23-28). There is joy also in his knowing that the Son rejoices that he, the Father, loves in such a way that he will not forbid the event of the Cross from occurring (Mtt 16:22) but wills to father in the Son the ability to love “to the end” as his incarnate image before the world (Jn 13:1; 14:31; 15:9).⁸⁰¹

This paternal joy, however, can coincide with the passion of love in “letting it [the suffering of the incarnate Son] be borne”. As he whose self-giving is the ever-accompanying and engendering source of the responsive love of the Son, the Father-Lover in this respect abandons

who, in the actions of his ‘images’, remains the archetype that also participates in the action, both in hidden and manifest ways.”

⁸⁰⁰ *GL* 7, 538. *TD* IV, 230-31: “We forget too easily that a divine Person, even in his incarnation and the vicissitudes of his humanity, is pure relation, and that the beatitude of God consists in being a gift of self [*Hingabe-Sein*]....[Hence] taking on death in sorrow and affliction can be for the Son (and for the other divine Persons) a work that proceeds from the highest joy.” *Ibid.*, 230: “Whether, while bearing the burden of sin, the Son experiences this glory and this joy is not said, but it does not prevent joy from being the permanent presupposition of the entire experience of dereliction. Just as on the Cross the death enacted is objectively life, so the extreme suffering is objectively joy.” My translation.

⁸⁰¹ This serves to explain K. Barth’s assertion that “it is especially the suffering of the Son [in the paschal event] that proves..., and to a depth no creature has ever been able to attain, that he is the only beloved Son”; *KD*, IV/2, 399; my translation. See *TD* IV, 226-32, and *GL* 7, 535-40, for Balthasar’s reflections on the unity of joy and suffering in the God who reconciles us to himself in Jesus Christ.

himself to “embrace as his own the experience which is the Beloved’s”.⁸⁰² It therefore becomes possible to apprehend a paradox which characterizes the Father’s com-”passion” toward the Son he has sent: the Father knows at once both communion with the Son and “distance” from the Son in his otherness--he knows, that is, that the role of the “immaculate Lamb” can be played only by the Son.⁸⁰³ Hence, the experience of the Father is itself in the figure of a cross, so to speak: his movement of love carries him horizontally to be with the beloved Son in accompaniment “to the end” (see Jn 8:28; 16:32), and yet the Father is pierced by the vertical thrust of knowing that his “place” precludes his substituting himself for the Son.⁸⁰⁴ In sum: for Balthasar, that which alone is worthy of faith--that which alone is worthy of summoning forth the free creature’s unreserved self-abandonment to God--is in the first place the love of the Father who, in not sparing his only Son (Rom 8:32), does not spare himself “suffering” in an analogous way (albeit in ever greater dissimilarity) to that facing Abraham (Gen. 22:12,16) and David (2 Sam 19:1).⁸⁰⁵

Before bringing to a close our examination of paternal affectivity in Balthasar’s trinitarian theology, we will offer a general summary of the interconnection Balthasar makes between the

⁸⁰² See *GL* 1, 258. In *TD* IV, 215, Balthasar expresses his agreement with Barth who says that “in Jesus Christ, God himself--thus also the Father with the Son in the unity of the Spirit--has suffered what this man has suffered unto the bitter end”; *KD*, IV/3, 478; my translation.

⁸⁰³ Since the Son, and not the Father, is the ground of the creature’s “place” (see Eph 1:6ff), only the Son can take on the mission unto the Cross for man and as man. Jean Galot, in his work *Dieu souffre-t-il?* (Paris: Duculot-Lethielleux, 1976), 95, offers a certain reversal of perspective in the face of traditional theories of redemption. In his view, the primary sacrifice is made by the Father in delivering over his Son.

⁸⁰⁴ Shifting the point of departure to the incarnate Son, Balthasar states in *GL* 1,328: “the God-Man’s experience [of the Father] as creature is, as such, an expression and function of his trinitarian experience. In other words, his experience of distance from God...is as such the expression of God’s experience of himself within the Trinity in the distance of distinction between Person and Person.” *Ibid.*, 324: “In the existence and experience of this man God ‘puts himself into words’ and interprets himself for us (Jn 1:18): in this man’s hearing, seeing,...living, and suffering God associates himself intimately with man....In God, who is Spirit, there is found a hearing, a seeing, a being-together. God himself hears himself, sees himself, and is one with himself....This unity between the Father and the Incarnate Son must include the divinity of the Son as the condition of its possibility. It therefore constitutes a sensory experience which the divine person of the Son has of the Father-- an experience which belongs to the self-utterance of the Father in his Son.”

⁸⁰⁵ Balthasar in *TD* IV, 219-20, quotes H. Schürmann with approval: “Der Tod Jesu (lässt) Gott nicht unberührt, denn ‘Liebe’ muss letztlich von daher gedacht werden, dass Gott um der Liebe zu seiner Welt willen seines

mystery of the “immanent” affectivity of the divine Persons in the eternal event of absolute love and the “economic” modalities which it takes on in the paschal mystery.

G.4. *General Overview*

We have seen that the Father in an eternal act of self-abandonment (an original kenosis) begets the Son as his consubstantial “Thou” who is “let-be” to a distinct hypostatic disposal of the infinite freedom of divinity vis-à-vis his paternal Source. This means that the generating Father establishes an inter-personal relationship of infinite “distance” between himself and the Son which is the absolute ground or foundation [*Fundament*] of the distance between God and the creature,⁸⁰⁶ with this latter having its full signification in the distance between God and his covenant partner.⁸⁰⁷ “God the Father”, after all, “has not created the world ‘outside’ of himself but in the Son.”⁸⁰⁸ The theo-drama of salvation history, therefore, can be enacted only at the interior of the primal drama [*Urdrama Gottes*] that originates in the Father’s generation of the Son. As Balthasar expresses it: “the drama of the ‘emptying’ of the Father’s heart in generating the Son contains and surpasses every conceivable drama that may be played out between God and whatever world.”⁸⁰⁹

Balthasar commends Jean Galot for affirming an authentic analogy between the suffering of the world and the suffering of the divine Persons in the economic order (in what concerns the contingent, *ad extra* decision to create and redeem finite freedom called to holiness yet susceptible

eigenen Sohns nicht schonte....Gottes Entäusserung in Menschwerdung und Tod Jesu hat ihre ontische Möglichkeit in Gottes ewiger Entäusserung seiner dreipersönlichen Hingabe.” H. Schürmann, *Jesu ureigner Tod* (Herder, 1975), 146f.

⁸⁰⁶ See *TD* 4, 323, 327.

⁸⁰⁷ See *TD* 4, 330-31.

⁸⁰⁸ *TD* IV, 223 see also *ibid.*, 362. “Der Vater erschafft die Welt im Blick auf den Sohn, und nicht indem er sich einmal nach aussen wendet. Nein, sondern im Blick auf den Sohn, auf das inner-göttliche Leben, erschafft Gott die Welt.” Hermann Volk, *Vollendung des Lebens: Hoffnung auf Herrlichkeit* (Grünwald, Mainz 1979), 21.

⁸⁰⁹ *TD* 4, 327. And in *TD* IV, 221, he writes that “the distance is infinite between the Persons at the interior of the dynamic of the event of the divine essence, so much so that all contingent events can occur only within this enveloping dynamic”. My translation.

to sin).⁸¹⁰ Galot is unambiguously firm in maintaining that “suffering” as attributed to the economic Trinity carries a non-univocal predication: in ever-greater dissimilarity to creaturely suffering which signifies an ontological deficiency, the divine suffering of the economic Trinity is to be understood as a modality of supreme love and as such belongs to the pure perfection of God.⁸¹¹ From here Galot is led to consider whether “the link between love and suffering has a foundation” in the inner-divine Trinity. He, like Balthasar, apprehends this foundation in the “ecstatic love” of the Persons which unfolds in a dynamic of reciprocal self-renunciation according to the order of the eternal processions.⁸¹²

Both Balthasar and Galot are adamant in refusing to entertain any form of “process theology” (such as Moltmann propounds) that simply identifies the involvement of the economic Trinity in the world’s history unto the Christ event with the eternal and immanent processions which constitute the divine essence as absolute love. Granted that the sole definitive source of our knowledge of the trinitarian life in God is the kenotic event of the Son’s mission which issues in the outpouring of the Spirit, “we must feel our way back into the mystery of the absolute, employing a negative theology that excludes from God all intramundane experience and suffering [*Schmerz*]”, even while we must follow the intuition of faith and posit in God an essential property [*Wesenseigenschaft*]]--which J. Maritain is content to leave unnamed--as the precondition of the world’s salvation achieved through the suffering and death of the incarnate Son.⁸¹³

⁸¹⁰ J. Galot, *op. cit.*, 147ff., and 166-67; cited in Balthasar, *TD IV*, 217.

⁸¹¹ J. Galot, *op. cit.*, 150-53, and 173; cited in Balthasar, *TD IV*, 217.

⁸¹² J. Galot, *op. cit.*, 174-76; cited in Balthasar, *TD IV*, 218.

⁸¹³ *TD 4*, 324. Later, in *ibid.*, 327, Balthasar reiterates: we are not “saying, in a Hegelian sense, that the trinitarian drama needs to pass through the contradictions of the world ...in order to go beyond the ‘abstract’, and becomes serious and concrete. Rather, we approach the mystery from two sides, that is, from that of negative theology, which excludes as ‘mythology’ any notion that God *has to* be involved in the world process; and from the point of view of the world drama, the possibilities of which must be grounded in God. In pursuing these paths, we are led by the hand through the trinitarian passages of Scripture, particularly John.” Emphasis Balthasar’s.

Now we have shown hitherto that Balthasar specifies Maritain's unnamed perfection of God as originating in the Father's generative kenosis, intrinsic to which is an unoriginated modality of affectivity vis-à-vis the Son. In generating, the Father delivers over himself along with the divine essence to the responsive decision of the Beloved. The modalities of the Father's self-surrender that we have elucidated throughout Part Two involve notes of self-engaging openness in relation to the infinitely Other (think of the paternal modalities of self-renunciation, receptivity, availability, dependency, and so forth) which as constitutive of God's pure act of love entail no imperfection.

Should the trinitarian Father freely choose to create and call human beings to adoption as sons in the Son, endowing them with finite freedom over-against the offer of his Fatherhood of grace, and should human beings abuse the gift of finite freedom by refusing to acknowledge its perfection in covenantal sonship, then the utterly positive and eternally actual modalities of paternal affectivity in God, when transposed into this condition of a sin-ruptured covenant, can assume the negative modalities of "suffering", "sorrow", and indeed "wrath".⁸¹⁴ Nevertheless, the transposition of the Father's inner-trinitarian affectivity into a sin-conditioned covenant where it interprets itself in terms of the "pierced heart" of the Son and Image cannot be such as to render the immutable God mutable. For it is only if the Father's eternal generation of the Son is successfully transposed or translated in the Son's temporal mission--that is, if the eternal generation remains unchanged (neither increasing nor diminishing in perfection)--that it can in its economic expression assume humankind's tragic situation of godlessness and work the restoration from within, bringing

⁸¹⁴ TD 4, 328: "[I]f we ask whether there is suffering in God, the answer is this: there is something in God [*in Gott ist der Ansatzpunkt für das*] that can develop into suffering [*Leiden*]. This suffering occurs when the recklessness [*Vorsichtslosigkeit*] with which the Father gives himself away (and *all* that is his) encounters a freedom that, instead of responding in kind to this magnanimity, changes [*verwandelt*] it into a calculating, cautious self-preservation. This contrasts with the essentially divine recklessness of the Son, who allows himself to be squandered."

humankind in Christ to a re-birth from the Father.⁸¹⁵ Were this not so, the God of the Covenant would appear on the world-stage as a player himself entangled in sin and in need of extrication therefrom, which is not the case according to God's self-attestation in biblical history.

There is, however, one point concerning which Balthasar expresses disagreement with Galot. In Balthasar's estimation, Galot makes too abrupt a distinction between an "untouchable" [*unberührbar*] beatitude of the inner-divine Trinity and an at least "*affektiv*" if not "*effektiv*" relation of the Trinity to the world.⁸¹⁶ Such a distinction represents, to Balthasar's mind, one form of the unsatisfactory theological position which maintains that God is immutable [*unveränderlich*] in himself but mutable [*bewegbar*] in another.⁸¹⁷ For his part, Balthasar argues that "the event of the incarnation of the Second Person does not leave the inter-relationship of those divine Persons unaffected...[for] the eternal relations of Father and Son are focused, during the 'time' of Christ's earthly wanderings, and in a sense which must be taken with full seriousness, in the relations between the man Jesus and his heavenly Father".⁸¹⁸ On soteriological grounds Balthasar reasons that if the Son "represents" sinners by taking upon himself the consequences of their refusal, then "God allows himself to be thoroughly affected by this, not only in the humanity of Christ but also in Christ's trinitarian mission".⁸¹⁹ To be sure, the Son who is "made to be sin" (2Cor 5:21) does not experience "the darkness of the sinful state...in the same way as the (God-hating) sinner, but

⁸¹⁵ *TD* 4, 330-31: "Covenant and creation are not only rendered possible by the Son's 'eucharistic' response to the Father: they are 'surpassed' by it....[B]ecause of the Son's all-embracing *eucharistia*, God cannot be entangled in some kind of tragic role; he is not torn in two, which would signify a persistent, unconquerable hell in God."

⁸¹⁶ *TD* IV, 218. See Galot, *op. cit.*, 147ff., and 166ff.

⁸¹⁷ K. Barth and K. Rahner, too, take up this position despite other points of divergence among their respective expositions of the mystery of the Trinity. See *TD* IV, 219.

⁸¹⁸ *MP*, 30. And in *GL* 1, 195, Balthasar affirms: "[F]aith's contemplation of the form of Christ [the Crucified] does not allow us to consider the divine person in whom God and man are hypostatically united as in some sense 'detaching' itself from the essential unity of the Trinity during the span of its earthly existence. 'I and the Father are one. Whoever sees me, sees the Father.'"

⁸¹⁹ *TD* 4, 335.

nonetheless in a deeper and darker experience. This is because it takes place in the profound depths of the relations between the divine Hypostases”.⁸²⁰

All of this amounts to Balthasar suggesting that we extend the paradoxical character of the mystery of the immutable God of love beyond (i) God is impassible in himself and passible in another, to (ii) God is both unchanging and passible [*affektiv*] in his trinitarian interrelationships, which relationships, insofar as they are constitutive of the divine essence as an eternal event of trinitarian love, provide the ontic basis for an economic prolongation of this unity (of unchangeability and passibility) in an analogous manner, without resulting in separate performances played out by split personalities, if you will. That “the Father’s relationship to the incarnate Son, in the communication of the gift of the Spirit, is the very relationship that constitutes the Trinity,”⁸²¹ means for Balthasar that the God of Jesus Christ graciously permits his trinitarian inter-relationships to assume at their interior the covenantal drama between infinite and finite freedom. The otherness (alterity) which is proper to the immanent exchange of trinitarian love and to which belongs interpersonal affectivity allows for the otherness of the world in relation to God to be contained in God (in the locus of the Son), if not constitutive of God. Inasmuch as the creaturely otherness of finite freedom is grounded in and surpassed by the otherness of the only Son in God over against whom generative love is affective, the love of God in Christ can prove itself “strong as hell: no it is stronger.”⁸²² The creature’s No is drawn into and “is left behind by the current of love” whose source is the Father.⁸²³ This explains why Balthasar follows J. Maritain in pointing to a paradox that belongs to divine blessedness [*Seligkeit*], “whose flames”, says Maritain,

⁸²⁰ *TD* 4, 336.

⁸²¹ *ITC*, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (1981), I, C, 3, p. 212.

⁸²² See *TD* 4, 325.

⁸²³ See *TD* 4, 330.

“are simultaneously the eternal splendour of glorious possession [*Besitz*] and the eternal splendour of glorious endurance (acceptation) [*Hinnahme*]”.⁸²⁴

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Excursus:
On the Prospect of Universal Salvation:
Balthasar’s Trinitarian Grounds for Christian Hope

In one of his earliest works, Hans Urs von Balthasar expresses the permanently valid concern that “*all* the theological tractates be given a trinitarian form”.⁸²⁵ He himself devotes most of his subsequent writings to the task of illuminating the Christian mysteries against the backdrop of the Trinity. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that when Balthasar poses the question whether we as Christians dare hope for the salvation of every human being, the perspective he adopts is that of a trinitarian (or theocentric) eschatology. As he explains, “the real ‘last thing’ is the triune life of God disclosed in Jesus Christ.” The dramatic engagement of God for us and with us, “in its final act, in its final aspect, can only be trinitarian”.⁸²⁶

Consequently, every attempt to understand what Balthasar is about in posing this question ought to consider his horizon of trinitarian love to be most decisive. Such is the approach we will take in the present study. We will begin with a brief examination of the legitimacy of the question at issue by considering the testimony of Sacred Scripture, the parameters of theological speculation, and the scope of Christian hope. We will then go on to develop certain implications of Balthasar’s

⁸²⁴ Balthasar in *TD IV*, 219, quotes from J. Maritain, *op. cit.*, 312. Maritain also contends (*ibid.*, 311): “Sin does something to God that reaches his divine depths, not thereby making God undergo some effect produced by the creature, but by its being let to pass over, in its relation to God, on the side of this unnamed divine perfection, that which is the eternal exemplar [*Urbild*] of what in us is pain.”

⁸²⁵ *Razing the Bastions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 29. From the German original: *Schleifung der Bastionen: Von der Kirche in Dieser Zeit* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1952).

⁸²⁶ *TD IV*, 49. Note: the English translation of this the final volume of Balthasar’s theodramatic theory is still in progress; it will be published as the fifth volume in the English edition. For this quotation I am using G. Harrison’s translation.

trinitarian theology which, we think, prove to be the ultimate foundation of his hope in the prospect of universal salvation--even if he himself does not always apply these insights in an explicitly thematic fashion. We will conclude, finally, with some comments on the pastoral concerns associated with the hope that all be saved.

Let it be said from the outset that we are deliberately putting to one side those elements in Balthasar's theology that comprise a doctrine of human perdition.⁸²⁷

a. Scriptural directives

Balthasar identifies two series of statements in the New Testament concerning the definitive judgment of human beings. The first confronts us with the real possibility of eternal perdition; the second "throws open a seemingly unbounded prospect for our hope"⁸²⁸ based on the universal scope of God's saving will and action in Jesus Christ.

We can regard Matthew 25:31-46 as representative of the first series of texts.⁸²⁹ Its portrayal of the final judgment allows for the possibility of a twofold outcome: one will enter either the kingdom of the Father or the fire of hell. Balthasar agrees with Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger that, properly understood, the nature of such a discourse is a summons to accept and live out the divine law of self-emptying love. Texts like this assert that every human being is "placed in the position of having to make a decision with irrevocable consequences" and warn that by refusing to conform oneself to Christ in mind and deed one can exclude oneself forever from communion

⁸²⁷ See, for example, *TD* IV, 258-64, and 273-88. Too little attention, in our opinion, has been paid as yet to these elements, and too little work has been done toward providing a synthetic overview (and, as needed, an elaboration) of Balthasar's thought on the subject of hell as a possible outcome of the dramatic action between God and human freedom.

⁸²⁸ *DWH*, 177.

⁸²⁹ References within the NT Epistles to the possibility of eternal ruin as the outcome of judgment for an individual include Rom 2:2-11; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 2 Cor 5:10; Gal 5:20-21; Eph 5:5; 2 Thess 1:8-9; Heb 6:4-9; 10:26-32. Among the parables of Jesus, see Mt 25:31-46; 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50; 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Lk 16:19-31; in regard to the preaching of Jesus which refers to eternal punishment, see Mt 5:22, 29-30; 8:12; 10:28; 13:42, 50; 18:8-9; 23:33; 25:30, 41, 46; and Mk 16:16. Finally among the Johannine writings, see Jn 5:29; 12:48; and Rev 19:20-21; 20:7-9; 21:8.

with God. To read this discourse as if it were “an anticipatory report” informing us that some human beings will in fact be damned would be to step outside the boundaries of the biblical witness.⁸³⁰ These boundaries are more clearly recognized in light of the etiological character of biblical statements about the eschatological future. As John R. Sachs points out, since the basis for speaking of the eschatological future is, ultimately, “what has taken place in the Christ event” and the subsequent unfolding of this event in history, and since the crucifixion of Christ itself discloses that “human beings can and do reject God”, the threat of hell conveyed by these statements is best understood as coextensive with “the possibility that the sinner might choose finally to persist in such rejection”.⁸³¹ Thus, while we can say that these texts give us sure knowledge of our situation as creatures *under* judgment, they do not grant us to see beyond the crisis of decision to an actual *negative* outcome of any individual’s destiny.⁸³² The 1985 German Bishops’ Conference addressed this issue as follows: “Neither Holy Scripture nor the Church’s Tradition of faith asserts with certainty of any man that he is actually in hell. Hell is always held before our eyes as a *real possibility*, one connected with the offer of conversion and life....Holy Scripture does not tell us whether any man has ever actually decided against God with ultimate finality.”⁸³³

⁸³⁰ Karl Rahner, “Hell”, *The Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 603; quoted by Balthasar in *DWH*, 32. According to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, all New Testament and theological talk about hell has but one point: “to bring man to come to grips with his life in view of the real possibility of eternal ruin and to understand revelation as a demand of the utmost seriousness. The fundamental reference to this redemptive meaning of the dogma must therefore serve as both a boundary marker and an internal guideline for all speculation in this area.” *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche* V, col. 448; quoted by Balthasar in *DWH*, 198.

⁸³¹ John R. Sachs, “Current Eschatology: Universal Salvation and the Problem of Hell,” *Theological Studies* 52 (1991), 238-39.

⁸³² Concerning the specific case of Judas, see Mk 14:21; Mt 26:24; Lk 22:22; Acts 1:20, 25. Rudolf Schnackenberg contends that the judgment of Judas retains the possibility of a twofold outcome since, on the basis of these statements, it “is not certain that he [Judas] is damned for all eternity” (*LTK* 8: 662; cited in *DWH*, 19). John Paul II agrees: “Even when Jesus says of Judas, the traitor, ‘It would be better for that man if he had never been born’ (Mt 26:24), his words do not allude for certain to eternal damnation.” *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 186. Henceforth, *Threshold*. In addition, *CCC*, #597.

⁸³³ *CCF*, 346. About this catechism Balthasar notes that it “was discussed sentence by sentence in Rome”; *DWH*, 164. Nowhere in its pages does it teach as a datum of Scriptural revelation that some (albeit unidentified) human beings are or will be in hell. As for the *CCC*, see #1036 and 1041. If, when taken alone, #1036 is not free of ambiguity (do the pertinent passages of Scripture not only serve as a call to conversion but also disclose that many are actually

The second series of texts alludes to a “universalist” resolution of salvation history.⁸³⁴ From among these statements Balthasar selects several for special emphasis: Titus 2:11, “For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men”; 2 Pt 3:9, it is not God’s purpose “that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance”; Rom 11:32, “God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all”; and Jn 12:31-32, God’s “judgment...upon this world” occurs when the Son, lifted up on the Cross, “will draw all men” to himself. Admittedly, in the attempt to render these texts compatible with the first series, distinctions could be proposed: “between a conditional and an absolute will for salvation on the part of God, between an objective redemption through Christ and its subjective acceptance”.⁸³⁵ Nevertheless, Balthasar observes a fundamental asymmetry at play in such distinctions, as between the first and the second series.

This asymmetry comes into view already in the Old Testament regarding perspectives on divine judgment. The writings of the prophets present God’s judgment under dual aspects: in the first place, as an action which takes the form of absolute opposition against those who “refuse and resist” the word of God--the wicked, the arrogant, and the ruthless (Is 1:20). In this context we find mention of Yahweh’s wrath and retributive justice (see Is 13:6-9,11; Jer 30:23).⁸³⁶ But there is another stream of texts which tends to consider the event of Yahweh’s judgment as salvific in its goal. “I will turn my hand against you, and refine your dross in the furnace, removing all your alloy....After that you shall be called city of justice, faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by

lost?), the ambiguity may be resolved if elsewhere in the CCC we find allowance for a universal scope to Christian hope. See Section III of this article.

⁸³⁴ See 1 Tim 2:4f.; 4:10; Rom 5:12-21; 11:26,32; 1 Cor 3:11-15; 15:22-28; 2 Cor 5:14, 19; Eph 1:10; Phil 2:10f.; Col 1:20; Titus 2:11; Heb 9:27f.; Mt 18:14; Jn 3:16; 5:24; 6:37-39; 12:31-32,47; 16:33; 17:2; Rev 21:1-2; 2 Pt 3:9.

⁸³⁵ *DWH*, 39.

⁸³⁶ Balthasar is firm in contending that “this wrath is no ‘pretence’: the categorical ‘No’ of God’s reaction to the attitude that the world takes up over against him. God owes it to himself and to his loving covenantal righteousness to utter this ‘No’ and to maintain it as long as his will is not done on earth as in Heaven”. *GL* 7, 206.

judgment, and her repentant ones by justice” (Is 1:24-27).⁸³⁷ The motif of judgment in the Old Testament, then, is not simply restricted to the notion of a divine verdict--either punishment or reward--over against the actions of creatures. Already prefigured is an asymmetry between the work of sinners under judgment and the work of God effected through judgment.

The economy of Jesus Christ reveals this asymmetry to be that than which nothing greater can be conceived. For the event of the Cross that mediates eschatological judgment⁸³⁸ is an event in which the eternal Father-Son relationship in God transposes itself *pro nobis*.⁸³⁹ In the new alliance, God’s definitive judgment against sin is pronounced vis-à-vis his only Son who offers himself before the Father in an “exchange of place” with sinners. “For our sakes God made him who did not know sin, to be sin, so that in him we might become the very holiness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). From this vantage point the divine work of judgment is seen to be realized in such a way that retributive justice is upheld and yet surpassed. “[I]n Jesus’ mission unto death”, states Balthasar, “the entire (strict) judgment of God is expressed and reaches its end”, and this work of judgment between God the Father and God the Son incarnate “creates the necessary condition for the Spirit of God to be infused in our hearts that we might be incorporated into the new and

⁸³⁷ Similarly, the prophet Hosea announces Yahweh’s act of judgment under a twofold aspect: as a punishment that issues in Israel’s conversion; see Hos 2:15,16-17; 6:1-3. Through the prophecies of Jeremiah, Yahweh promises that those who shall undergo judgment-as-exile “shall return to me with their whole heart” (Jer 24:5-7; see 9:6; 18:7f.). In regard to the fourth song of the Servant of Yahweh (Is 52:13-53:12), we cannot consider the people’s misjudgment of the Servant (by which is disclosed the people’s alienation from Yahweh himself) to be on an equal plane with Yahweh’s redemptive judgment of the people by means of his “burdening” the innocent Servant “with the sins of us all” (Is 53:6).

⁸³⁸ “John situates the judgment [of the world] in the event of the Cross (Jn 12:31), and from there affirms that the one who believes in the Son ‘does not come under condemnation but has passed from death to life’ (Jn 5:24). In addition the Synoptics (especially Matthew) describe the death of Jesus on the Cross under the images of eschatological judgment.” *TD IV*, 252.

⁸³⁹ Only the (utterly free) economic extension of this inner-divine relationship is able to encompass and “overcome” (Jn 16:33) the totality of sin in human history. “The quality of the loving obedience of the Son of God toward the Father” as the Son enters upon his passion and death “is beyond all comparison with the quality of hate[, the whole power of sin,] spending its fury on him”. *Rdr*, 153.

definitive covenant, becoming persons in Christ”.⁸⁴⁰ To be sure, Balthasar does not interpret the event of judgment which takes place between the Father and the Son made man as displacing the judgment (whether particular or general) between God and human beings. Instead, it is far more true to say that by virtue of undergoing judgment in our place the Son “em-places” us to undergo judgment with him.⁸⁴¹ How the effects of this “em-placing” concern not only the objective realm of what God has done but also bear upon the subjective realm of human action and decision will be dealt with in section (d) below.

On the basis of the paschal mystery a concomitant asymmetry can be discerned with respect to God’s self-disposing vis-à-vis sinners: rather than manifesting a disposition equally ready to reject as to forgive, the inter-trinitarian work of judgment that occurs in the Christ event shows itself to be a function of absolute benevolent love, love which as trinitarian aims to enable every human being to re-turn together with the Son toward the Father, with a love begotten in answer to the love shown by the Father (see 1 Jn 4:7-11). This insight is integral to the gospel proclamation, and holds true whether we who are under judgment consider the Father or the Son as our Judge. Regarding the Father, Saint Paul declares: “it is precisely in this that God [the Father] proves his love for us: that while we were still sinners Christ died for us....[that] when we were enemies, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son....[Hence] we go so far as to make God [the Father] our boast through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom 5:8,10-11; see 8:31-34). And insofar as “the Father has assigned all judgment to the Son” (Jn 5:22), it is Jesus, Savior of the world, who presides as our Judge (see Jn 3:17). “Christ”, says Joseph Ratzinger, “inflicts pure perdition on no one. In himself he is sheer salvation....Perdition is

⁸⁴⁰ *TD IV*, 250. My translation. Elsewhere Balthasar sees the event of the Cross which inaugurates the New Covenant as entailing “the triumph of grace, in and through judgment”; *TD 4*, 239.

⁸⁴¹ I borrow the term “em-place” from Norbert Hoffmann whose essay “Atonement and the Spirituality of the Sacred Heart” acknowledges dependence on Balthasar’s thought; in *Faith in Christ*, 162.

not imposed by him, but comes to be wherever a person distances himself from Christ.”⁸⁴² Consequently, in what concerns a theology of judgment, the idea of a “strict proportionality” between condemnation and mercy is out of the question.⁸⁴³

Certainly, the fundamental asymmetry affirmed by these texts (whether between the work of finite human freedom and that of infinite divine freedom, or, regarding infinite freedom alone, between a disposition of condemnation and mercy) does not supersede the possibility of a human being forfeiting the “acquittal and life” Christ brings to all by his death and Resurrection (Rom 5:18). To the contrary: Balthasar understands God’s eschatological judgment as mediated through the paschal event to coincide with God’s definitive summons to human freedom to render, on its part, a final decision for or against the God of Jesus Christ—a summons whose definitiveness is due to the exhaustiveness of God’s self-expression as Father in the mission of his Son. The boundless love that, in the Crucified, “extends all the way ‘to the end’ (Jn 13:1) is...the representation of God the Father as he is in himself through the Son who attests to him” (Jn 1:18).⁸⁴⁴ And it is precisely by virtue of the Son’s making known the Father through this final work (Jn 14:9-11) that finite freedom is confronted with “the unconditional necessity for accepting this truth of love, seeing its magnificence and responding to it through complete devotedness to one’s brethren (see 1 Jn 4:11)”.⁸⁴⁵ This means, in effect, that God, by his consummate self-utterance over against sin, sets himself in a relationship of mutual self-disclosure and judgment vis-à-vis his free creature. If it is God who, by his sovereign act of judgment upon sin, discloses the inmost recesses of his divine heart, it is in order to evoke from human freedom a reciprocal act of judgment upon infinite love, whereby the inmost thoughts of the human person are laid bare. “Love itself is the crisis: insofar as

⁸⁴² J. Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 205.

⁸⁴³ See *TD* IV, 251.

⁸⁴⁴ *DWH*, 41. And *ibid.*, 22: “[T]hrough the Passion and Resurrection of the Son, the Father will have spoken all of his Word to the end, thereby ‘overcoming the world’ (Jn 16:33).”

it is the truth, it contains justice within itself”, which is why Jesus can say that anyone who rejects “God’s proclaimed word of love” in the One he has sent, condemns himself (see Jn 12:45-48; 3:17-19).⁸⁴⁶

Concerning the possibility of being lost, therefore, fear has its place primarily in reference to the extent to which human freedom can persist in refusing absolute love as its ultimate end. While we remain on this side of eternity, the testimony of Sacred Scripture does not remove the threat which human autonomy can pose to itself by preferring the lie to the truth about God and his dominion. The two series of statements which we introduced at the start lead us even now to the foot of the Cross where, on the one hand, finite freedom can take its stand upon its own (God-estranged) norms of judgment: “Come down...if you are God’s Son” (Mt 27:40); *and* on the other, infinite freedom, by manifesting its nature in fullness through the event of the Son’s being lifted up (Jn 8:28), “will draw all men to” the eternal Word and norm of divine judgment (12:31-32). Hence, despite the asymmetry which exists between the two streams of texts, it is not permissible for Christian theology to construct an eschatology that would subsume one series under the other.⁸⁴⁷

b. Parameters of theological speculation

This constraint upon Catholic eschatology is confirmed by the Church’s magisterial condemnation of every theory that has entailed just such a subsumption. We are referring, of course, to the condemnations issued against the doctrines of double predestination⁸⁴⁸ and of

⁸⁴⁵ *DWH*, 41.

⁸⁴⁶ *DWH*, 41-42. In addition, see *CCC*, #679.

⁸⁴⁷ See *DWH*, 22-23, 29, and 177.

⁸⁴⁸ See the Second Council of Orange in 529: DS 397; and the Council of Trent in 1563: DS 1567.

apocatastasis.⁸⁴⁹ Each of these doctrines, positioned at opposite extremes, failed to propose a theological framework (specifically with respect to the relationship between infinite and finite freedom) capable of encompassing and maintaining the viability of the twofold possibilities represented by the two series of biblical passages. Inarguably, at the end of time, when either one or the other possibility proves to be in fact the outcome of God's final judgment (either at least one human being will be lost, or all will be saved), the actual result will necessarily exclude the alternative outcome. Nevertheless, in order to uphold the situation of humankind under judgment as proclaimed by Scripture, the divine economy must be understood in such a way that *both* outcomes can be affirmed *as real possibilities*.⁸⁵⁰ In short: although the results are mutually exclusive, the possibilities as such are not. Gaston Fessard puts it this way: "To the question: eternal hell or universal salvation? I respond: hell *and* universal salvation."⁸⁵¹

Nothing, however, forbids the theologian to turn his attention to one of the possible outcomes in an attempt to render it consonant with reason, so long as his reflections do not rule out the other possibility. Following Augustine, the theological tradition of the West concentrated its efforts on explaining how it is possible that all may *not* be saved. These efforts produced the distinctions between God's universal, conditional will to save and God's particular, absolute will to

⁸⁴⁹ From the Provincial Council of Constantinople in 543: "If anyone says or holds that the punishment of the demons and of impious men is temporary, and that it will have an end at some time, or that there will be a complete restoration (*apokatastasis*) of demons and impious men, *anathema sit*." DS 411.

⁸⁵⁰ Gerhard Hermes has argued against the hope that all may be saved by contending that "the full truth about hell is not stated if one only speaks about its *possibility*...and not of its *reality*". In his view, the reality of hell as posed by divine revelation expressly includes the damnation of some human beings, even if we do not know for certain who these will be. See G. Hermes, "Hoffnung auf das Heil aller? Bei H. U. von Balthasar nichts Neues", *Der Fels* (November 1984), 320. But as Sachs reminds us, the Magisterium of the Church has offered no pronouncements that go as far as Hermes' position. With notable restraint, the Church teaches the reality of hell as it pertains to *human* destiny "only in the sense that those who die in the state of mortal sin enter into eternal punishment immediately upon death. At the same time the Church has refused to assert that anyone in fact has died or will die in such a state". Sachs, *art. cit.*, 238-39. See n. 48 of Sachs' article where he reviews the magisterial statements concerning hell. The most recent presentations of Church teaching in the *CCF* and the *CCC* exhibit similar restraint--see *CCF*, 346 and *CCC*, #1033-1037. See ahead to our final note in this excursus for further remarks regarding this interpretation of Christian doctrine on the reality of hell.

save, between virtual predestination and effective predestination, as well as between the divine work of objective redemption and the human collaboration through subjective acceptance. For his part, Balthasar does not dispute the legitimacy of this theological enterprise in general. He does, however, raise the objection that, starting with Augustine, the real possibility of eternal damnation was illegitimately transformed into the objective certainty that some (indeed, most) human beings will be lost. “And all those bowing to his [Augustine’s] authority”, writes Balthasar, “from Gregory the Great through the early and high Middle Ages--Anselm, Bonaventure, and Thomas not excepted--to the Reformers and Jansenists, will become *knowers* in the same sense, taking this knowledge [of the outcome of divine judgment] as a fully secure basis upon which to construct their further speculations about God’s twofold predetermination *post* or *ante praevisa merita*”.⁸⁵²

What of the possibility that all may be saved? Balthasar dares to remind us that it, too, warrants to be accorded theological consideration. In doing so he hardly displays the daring of a “lone ranger”, for he finds himself in good company. Among those theologians and philosophers whose work supports the possibility of universal salvation can be counted Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Evagrius Ponticus, (on occasion) Jerome of Bethlehem, Maximus the Confessor,⁸⁵³ Henri Cardinal de Lubac, Jean Cardinal Daniélou, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Walter Kasper, Romano Guardini, Karl Rahner, Gisbert Greshake, Medhard Kehl, Hermann-Josef Lauter, Edith Stein, Erich Przywara, and Gabriel Marcel.⁸⁵⁴ However numerous the ventures and diverse the perspectives, each and every attempt to

⁸⁵¹ Gaston Fessard, “Enfer éternel ou salut universel?” in *Le Mythe de la Peine, Colloque Castelli* (Paris: Aubier, 1967), 247. In *DWH*, 55, Balthasar quotes the concluding words of Fessard’s article (254): “I am not prohibited from thinking...that at the end of time my hope is fulfilled and all men are effectively saved.”

⁸⁵² *DWH*, 65. See St. Thomas, *S. Th.*, I, 23, 7.

⁸⁵³ See Balthasar’s response to Brian E. Daly’s criticism of his interpretation of Maximus’ position on this matter, in *DWH*, 64, n. 8.

⁸⁵⁴ More names yet can be added to the ranks. See the lists provided by Balthasar in *DWH*, 63, 168-69; and by J. Ratzinger in *Eschatology*, 216.

illuminate the prospect of universal salvation must be held to the same condition: in no case can it simply exclude the possibility of eternal perdition.

c. On the scope of Christian hope

In view of this state of being *under* judgment, “the question arises of just which form and scope Christian hope may, or may not, take.”⁸⁵⁵ This very question serves as the title of Balthasar’s “little book” (*DWH*) where it is linked with Paul’s exhortation to the Church to pray for the salvation of all. “First of all, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be offered for all men....Prayer of this kind is good, and God our savior is pleased with it, for he wants all men to be saved and to come to know the truth. And the truth is this: ‘God is one. One also is the mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all’” (1Tim 2:1-5). Christ’s sacrificial death is affirmed as the pre-eminent instance of a human will united perfectly to the divine will that wants all to be saved. Following his exaltation to “the right hand of the Father”, Christ entrusts his divine mission to the Church which functions as “the instrument for the salvation of all”⁸⁵⁶ by which Christ is “at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God’s love for men”.⁸⁵⁷ Since this mystery is manifested and actualized principally in the liturgy of the Eucharist, it is fitting that the Church’s liturgical prayers can be offered for all, that is to say, insofar as the breadth of her charity comprehends the reach of God’s mercy.⁸⁵⁸ From among the examples which Balthasar has collected we list these few:

⁸⁵⁵ *DWH*, 14. Emphasis is Balthasar’s.

⁸⁵⁶ *Lumen gentium*, 9, #2.

⁸⁵⁷ *Gaudium et spes*, 45, #1. See *CCC*, #772, 775-776.

⁸⁵⁸ *CCC*, #1037: “In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want ‘any to perish, but all to come to repentance’ (2 Pt 3:9).” When Thomas follows Augustine in arguing that in her Eucharistic liturgy the Church prays only for her members and *not* for all, the basis for this exclusion seems to be the distinction between sufficient and efficient grace, and the *assumption* that God’s grace in fact “produces no effect” in some who are thus destined for damnation. “As Christ’s Passion benefits all insofar as it is sufficient for the forgiveness of sins and the attaining of grace and glory, though it produces no effect save in those who are united to his Passion through faith and charity, so likewise this sacrifice, which is a memorial of the Lord’s Passion,

“Lord accept the offering of your Church; and may what each individual offers up to the honor of your name lead to the salvation of all. For this we pray to you through Christ our Lord.”

Weekday Mass I, Tuesday, Offertory Prayer

“Hidden God,...we thank you for your patience....Make us receptive to you. Let the whole of forlorn mankind find its way to you. For this we pray through Jesus Christ.”

Collect #22

“Lord, may this sacrifice that has made our peace with you, advance the peace and salvation of all the world.”

Eucharistic Prayer III

What is of concern to Balthasar is the task which these prayers lay before theology: namely, shedding light on how such prayer can be considered “sensible”, directed as it is toward a universalist denouement. Are the faithful permitted to affirm that these prayers might be heard? And even if the faithful may well pray for all, can they hope for all with a hope that is supernatural (i.e., a theological virtue)?

To this last question Leo Scheffczyk has given a negative answer. “The supernatural virtue of hope”, Scheffczyk explains, “rests upon belief. It is the power with which belief, which has not yet attained its goal, relies on the promises made to it. But because the belief of the Church does not carry with it the promise of the non-existence of hell, no supernatural hope can arise from this. To the believer, hope of beatitude is possible only for oneself and for those others who are bound together with him or her by supernatural love.”⁸⁵⁹ According to Scheffczyk, theological hope presupposes a divine promise, and its scope is restricted (on God’s side) to that which is promised and (on the side of creaturely freedom) to those who are meeting the conditions of this promise. Since God’s promise of eternal life pertains solely to those who believe, one can hope only for those who already accept God’s offer of salvation through Jesus Christ (granted that this faith may

has no effect save on those who are united to the sacrament through faith and charity....And so the Canon of the Mass makes no prayer for those who are outside the Church” (*S. Th.*, III, 79, 7, ad 2). But we do not know, argues Balthasar in his turn, that the benefits from Christ’s Passion will actually prove inefficacious with regard to the eternal destiny of any human being. For a sympathetic treatment of the theological stance represented by Thomas’ argument as viewed in light of 20th century Catholic ecclesiology, see Roch Kereszty, “The liturgy of the Eucharist,” *Communio* 23 (1996), 547-48.

be more or less implicit in those who “fear God and do what is right”⁸⁶⁰). In what concerns those who at present do not believe, there is no concomitant divine promise of non-damnation and hence no foundation for hope. If the notion of theological hope is confined to this position, Scheffczyk is right to be concerned that the inclusion of hope to the question of universal salvation (dare we *hope* that all...?) would point to a doctrine of apocatastasis. Theological hope for others who are rejecting the truth and goodness of God could only be maintained on the basis of a divine *promise* that God’s grace will be effective in moving every human being to faith and repentance at the last.

But is it necessary for us to follow Scheffczyk in confining the scope of theological hope to the certitude attendant upon God’s promises? Evidently not, if we examine the notion of supernatural hope as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Especially noteworthy is a passage which, though it begins by affirming the elements that are central to Scheffczyk’s conception, concludes nonetheless by declaring that supernatural hope can be directed to the salvation of all. “We can hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere ‘to the end’ (Mt 10:22) and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God’s eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for ‘all men to be saved’ (1 Tim 2:4).”⁸⁶¹ By asserting the latter, the new *Catechism* understands the field of supernatural hope to extend beyond the limits of a divine promise that something will or will not be so. It permits the believer to hope for what remains possible within the divine economy according to the purpose of God.

As regards what remains possible, another passage of the *Catechism* instructs us to see the prospect of universal salvation as resting primarily with the will and the power of God rather than

⁸⁵⁹ Leo Scheffczyk, “Apocatastasis: Fascination and Paradox,” *Communio* 12 (Winter, 1985), 395.

⁸⁶⁰ *Lumen gentium*, 9.

with human freedom. “The Church prays that no one should be lost....If it is true that no one can save himself, it is also true that God ‘desires all men to be saved’ (1 Tim 2:4), and that for him ‘all things are possible’ (Mt 19:26).”⁸⁶² Likewise, its comments on the Lord’s Prayer underscore the boundlessness of the Father’s salvific will in breadth and efficacy as the premise to our “ask[ing] insistently for his loving plan to be fully realized on earth as it is in heaven”. Although the Father’s plan cannot be accomplished without the surrender and conformation of human freedom to his will, still it belongs premierly to the Father as the source of absolute love to effect this obediential surrender in us. “We ask our Father to unite our will to his Son’s, in order to fulfill his will, his plan of salvation for the life of the world”.⁸⁶³

If we turn now to Balthasar’s reflections on the question of hope for the salvation of all, we should have little difficulty in discerning that his approach is generally consonant with the stance taken by the *Catechism*. Not only does Balthasar contend that Christian hope can be of universal scope (excluding the demonic powers),⁸⁶⁴ but he also attempts to elucidate the reason for this hope

⁸⁶¹ CCC, #1821.

⁸⁶² CCC, #1058. See also CCF, 114-16.

⁸⁶³ CCC, #2822-25. The *Catechism* goes on to quote St. John Chrysostom (*Hom. in Mt 19*, 5: PG 57, 280): Jesus “commands each of the faithful who prays to do so universally, for the whole world. For he did not say ‘thy will be done in me or in us,’ but ‘on earth,’ so that...earth [may] no longer differ from heaven” (#2825).

Precedence for this doctrine on Christian hope can be found already in Thomas’ *Compendium Theologiae*. In this work, which is presumably his last, Thomas considers a sufficient basis for the virtue of hope to be that one “believes of whatever one hopes that it can be attained; this is what hope adds to mere desire. Man can...also have desire for things that he does not believe he can attain; but hope cannot exist in such circumstances” (*ibid.*, c 8). Thomas then looks to the first petition within the Lord’s Prayer to guide his thoughts on the object of Christian hope. We can hope that God “be praised as great in the thoughts and reverence of all [*omnium*]....And this may not be seen as impossible, since he himself became man precisely in order that man should recognize God’s greatness. We thus ask that what he has begun may also come to fulfillment”. Thomas’ most restricted notion of theological hope is found in his *Commentary on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard which included Augustine’s alleged proposition that hope applies only to a future good affecting the one who hopes. Not surprisingly we find that Thomas here allows “certainty [*certitudo*] to theological hope, which, however, can deceive ‘*ex aliquo accidentali impedimento*’ [from some accidental obstacle] meaning when merits or steadfastness are lacking, so that ‘here below, the fear of separation [from God] is bound up with hope’ (3 d 26 q 2 a 4, ad 2 and 4)”. I quote from *DWH*, 74, n. 2.

⁸⁶⁴ Balthasar follows the teaching of the Church concerning what must lie outside the “universal scope” of Christian hope. *DWH*, 145: “[T]heological hope can by no means apply to [satanic] power. The sphere to which redemption by the Son who became man applies is unequivocally that of humankind.”

by focusing upon the saving work of the Blessed Trinity inasmuch as it may prove to be universally effective in the order of grace.

His speculations on this subject are better understood in reference to the two series of biblical statements which deal with divine judgment. Recall that the first series brings to the foreground the work of human freedom in its self-disposing before God. Scheffczyk, it seems to us, considers theological hope primarily within the context of this first series of texts: insofar as human freedom chooses to believe and live by love it can rely on the promise of heaven. Hope for another is permissible in virtue of the free assent he or she renders to divine grace. The dramatic encounter between infinite divine freedom and finite human freedom is thus viewed with the spotlight cast on the creature's self-disposing; given that God does not promise universal salvation, it is the role of human freedom that appears ultimately determinative of the scope to Christian hope. Balthasar, however, because he grants "an equal chance" to the second series of texts, will follow its directives and cast the spotlight in the other direction--toward the role that infinite freedom plays in the encounter. It then becomes a matter of illuminating how the work of infinite divine freedom vis-à-vis finite human freedom can be ultimately conducive of an outcome in which all may be saved, without disallowing human freedom the possibility of a final No to God.

d. *The all-powerful powerlessness of trinitarian love*⁸⁶⁵

The work of infinite freedom vis-à-vis human freedom can be considered in terms of God's gracious extending of his relation of natural Fatherhood to human beings. Precisely this work exhibits a generative power the purpose of which is to elicit from human freedom a self-disposing that corresponds (in being elevated by grace) to God's initiative of love, thereby begetting us as his adopted children (1 Jn 3:1; 4:7-11). Balthasar rightly insists that the evocative function of this

divine work is inseparable from its revelatory aspect. Commenting on the Father's sending of the Son, he notes that insofar as the Son's role is to "show" (Jn 14:8) or "make known" (Jn 1:18) the Father, it shares in the generative nature and aim of God's self-communication to human beings. "Revelation", he says, with respect to the Son's mission "means not only manifesting the Father's love in his own life...but inviting and empowering [others] to imitate and reproduce it themselves: 'Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Mt 5:48)".⁸⁶⁶

Balthasar is clear that on no account can we interpret this divine work of empowering to be an *overpowering* of human freedom. Otherwise, the end result could not serve as an appropriate reflection of the gracious autonomy out of which God acts. Instead, since the goal of God's self-communication is to bring to consummation a relationship of mutual love with finite freedom, it must be that God allows the creaturely partner a genuinely distinct self-disposing vis-à-vis his advances of love.

Perceiving that such an interplay between God and the creature presupposes the eternal relationship between Begetter and Begotten in the triune Godhead, Balthasar turns to the mystery of the Trinity in an effort to apprehend the ultimate ground for hope that the Father-Begetter's salvific purpose may be realized in the freedom of every human being. It can scarcely be overstated that Balthasar's trinitarian theology is itself extrapolated from Christology, in particular from a theology of the Cross. "All the same", he points out, "the Trinity, and not Christology, is the last horizon of the revelation of God in himself and in his dramatic relationship with the world. This is the true *eschaton* as seen from the theocentric perspective."⁸⁶⁷ Following Balthasar's lead, we will try to

⁸⁶⁵ Since, in what follows, we deem it necessary to provide a synthesis of the fundamental ideas treated hitherto in this chapter, some repetition of previous assertions is unavoidable.

⁸⁶⁶ *TD* 3, 518.

⁸⁶⁷ *TD* IV, 48. For this quotation I am using Graham Harrison's translation.

gain a glimpse of that “mysterious vitality” of God’s trinitarian love disclosed to us through Christological revelation and which alone can be the Alpha and the Omega of our hope.

Balthasar argues that, in order for there to be an inner-divine exchange of love between the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit, begetting in God entails “the definitive, irrevocable leaving-free [*Freilassung*] the Begotten”.⁸⁶⁸ Balthasar develops this theme by stressing that inasmuch as the Father’s act of self-giving begets the corresponding act of self-surrender that constitutes the Son, the Father allows [*lässt*] a distinct hypostatic exercise of infinite freedom over against himself.⁸⁶⁹ In this respect, we can speak of a properly paternal availability [*Verfügbarkeit*] vis-à-vis the Son that conveys an unoriginated assent to the filial mode of divine freedom.⁸⁷⁰ Since this paternal disposition of leaving-free, availability, and assent is intrinsic to the Father’s self-giving, it engenders its counterpart image in the Son. In effect, the paternal modality of leaving-free eternally calls forth from the Son a reciprocal act of leaving-free that takes the form of an originated assent--an answering availability--over against the generating Father. This means, Balthasar holds, that there is in the Son an act of allowing himself to be generated which is just as eternal as the generative act which brings it forth.⁸⁷¹ The Son’s modality of leaving-free, therefore, while it eternally issues *from* his being generated, is yet a simultaneous assent *to* his being generated, and hence is an assent not only to his Sonship but concomitantly to God’s Fatherhood.

⁸⁶⁸ *TD IV*, 73. Elsewhere, Balthasar says that the first hypostasis “is indeed Father only insofar as he is the unpreconceivable One-who-begets and leaves-free [*Zeugende und Freilassende*]”; *ibid.*, 82.

⁸⁶⁹ To be sure, the Son exercises the one essential will of the Godhead, but he does so by way of the nonreversible order of his eternal procession, and hence as his distinct hypostatic (personally filial) mode in relation to the generating Father.

⁸⁷⁰ *TD IV*, 77.

⁸⁷¹ *TD IV*, 75: “Dem entspricht im Sohn...ein Geschehenlassen, das ebenso ewig ist wie der hervorbringende Akt, somit im Akt mitgesetzt ist.” And in *TD2*, 256, Balthasar writes: the Son “allows [*lässt*] himself to be generated and...allows the Father to do with him as he pleases”.

These remarks lead us to still another consideration. In the trinitarian Father, the ability to leave-free embraces both omnipotence and powerlessness [*Allmacht und Unmacht*].⁸⁷² For if the Father *is* his act of begetting, and if this act is eternally consummated only as coincident with the Son's response of love, then insofar as the Father allows the Son a distinct mode of knowledge and decision in relation to his generative act⁸⁷³ he, in effect, delivers over his Paternity to the Son's deeming and disposing. And so paradoxically, the Father's leaving-free the Son bespeaks a genuine "giving-over of power" [*Machtübergabe*] which nevertheless--rather, *precisely as such*--is of infinite generative power.⁸⁷⁴ This explains Balthasar's statement that the Son's "eternal Yes to being-given-himself as consubstantially divine" is an entirely begotten and elicited "Yes to the primal kenosis of the Father in the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness: omnipotence, since he [the Father] can give all; powerlessness, since nothing is as truly powerful as the offering" wherein the Father allows himself to be disposed of by the Other.⁸⁷⁵ Thus, in the eternal and absolute exchange between the Father-Lover and the Beloved Son, the "defenselessness" of the Father's self-surrender is infinitely powerful. Let there be no misunderstanding: it is not the Son's modality of leaving-free (allowing the Father to father him) that renders the Father's act omnipotent; on the contrary, it is the modality of leaving-free proper to the Father that, as self-determined "weakness" in being-for an Other, empowers the Son to correspond to the equal extreme of selflessness.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷² See *TD IV*, 65.

⁸⁷³ In *TD IV*, 445, Balthasar writes about "die dreieinige göttliche Freiheit, die innerhalb ihrer Einheit jeder Hypostase ihre eigene Sicht- und Entscheidungsweise belässt".

⁸⁷⁴ See *TD IV*, 57-58.

⁸⁷⁵ *TD 4*, 326. I have slightly modified G. Harrison's translation.

⁸⁷⁶ It is possible, of course, to speak of infinite power as an attribute of the divine substance or absolute being (*esse*) in contradistinction to the created universe of finite being and activity, and all the while to exclude from consideration the trinitarian processions within the Godhead. But for Balthasar, to regard God's almighty power solely from this vantage point results in an insufficiently *Christian* conception. To achieve the latter, our reflection should include at the same time the fact that God reveals himself to be love through his sending of his only Son as an offering for our sins and through his giving us of his Spirit (cf. 1 Jn 4:9-10,13). On this basis we are directed to ponder that what constitutes infinite power is identical with the tri-personal event of absolute, self-surrendering love that has its source in the hypostasis of the Father. This interpretation, which retrieves and renews the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers, does not conceive of the divine substance as ever existing in a "naked" state without a hypostasis,

Next we see a critical move in Balthasar's thought: he expressly links the all-powerful powerlessness of the Father's leaving-free the Son with God's leaving-free the creature over against his Fatherhood of grace. "Within the Trinity, God's all-powerful love is also powerlessness, not only giving the Son an equal, divine freedom but also giving the creature itself--the image of God--a genuine power of freedom and taking it utterly seriously."⁸⁷⁷ It is here, I suggest, in what concerns the power of God in handing himself over to the freedom he himself bestows, that we penetrate to the heart of Balthasar's theocentric eschatology. Yet more remains to be said about the conditions which make for the utter seriousness of the encounter between infinite and finite freedom, not least of which involves passing through, so to speak, the pierced heart of the crucified Son of God.

The creative procession of finite freedom from God, we have already observed, has its presupposition and ground in the inner-divine generation of the Son from the Father. Since it is in the "acting area" of the Son in relation to the generating Father that finite freedom comes into existence and moves toward its self-realization, the capacity of human freedom to be summoned to filial adoption by God the Father is to be found here. But while the Father's mode of infinite freedom in generating the consubstantial Son, by virtue of its constitutive identity with absolute love, serves as a "*necessary will*" [*Nezessitätswille*] given with the Son's eternal procession and in relation to which the Son's mode of infinite freedom is *necessarily* the perfect correspondence of

that is, without "a mode of being". (See Basil, *Epistulae*, 38, 2, PG 32:325ff.; and Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 1, PG 45:337.) This means that infinite power is originatively determined by the mode of being proper to the Father, that is, by the manner in which the Father disposes of the divinity, and that consequently, the Son's mode of being divine--divinely powerful--owes itself to and correspondingly images that of the Father. In fine, what Balthasar wants to emphasize is that the power of the Father's generative act is not to be accounted for merely in respect to power as predicated of the divine (undifferentiated) substance, but also, indeed primarily, in respect to how the Father disposes of divine being. See Balthasar, *TD* IV, 57-58. Let us add that Balthasar's perspective is in accord with the ITC's 1981 document "Theology, Christology, Anthropology", which employs a "metaphysic of charity" granting person a certain primacy over substance. "In ancient philosophy substance in general was at the center of things, but here [inasmuch as 'the mystery of God and man is shown to the world as the mystery of love'] the center is a 'metaphysic of charity', namely, the person, whose most perfect act is the act of charity." *ITC*, 214.

⁸⁷⁷ *TD* 4, 330-1.

Beloved to Lover,⁸⁷⁸ the same necessity cannot be ascribed to the dramatic encounter between divine freedom and human freedom. Indeed, God cannot posit a creature that is free yet, from the start, “congealed in goodness” (to use a phrase of de Lubac’s); instead, as Balthasar stresses repeatedly, it is of the essence of creaturely freedom “to be able to choose one’s own highest value”.⁸⁷⁹ As for this choice, it requires that human autonomy be situated among finite goods which both point to and conceal God as the infinite good. This divine latency cannot be bypassed in any (temporal) encounter between infinite and finite freedom--not even in regard to God’s self-revelation in salvation history.

The Father’s Word, the Son, becomes ‘flesh’...but since it is still a question of facilitating human freedom, [the absolute good] is even more deeply latent than before....[T]he choice confronting [human freedom] is a *‘latens Deitas quae sub figuris vere latitas’*: the crucified flesh of a Jewish individual....The ‘enlightening’ brought about by the revelation of infinite freedom’s plan...does not put an end to divine latency in favor of some kind of universal knowledge attainable without a decision on freedom’s part. God is now more profoundly latent, and thus he makes both a greater gift of love to finite freedom and a greater challenge to it.⁸⁸⁰

Bringing together the features which Balthasar considers integral to God’s work vis-à-vis human freedom, we see that in God’s leaving-free his creature to choose its highest value there is at play a twofold dynamic of self-disclosure and self-concealment which is appropriate to a love that allows itself to be “judged” and, in this sense, disposed of by creaturely freedom. Moreover, God’s allowing human freedom to deem and dispose of his initiatory act of love, insofar as it indicates a giving-over of power, shows us an omnipotence that can coincide with powerlessness.⁸⁸¹ And what

⁸⁷⁸ With respect to the *ad intra* activity of the triune Godhead, there is an identity of freedom and necessity: this activity is of its nature necessary and absolute in constituting what God is (God wills to be what God is), yet nevertheless is identical with absolute self-possession and self-disposing (God is what he wills to be). Hence in what concerns the *ad intra* trinitarian processions, absolute self-disposing unfolds in terms of a necessary will originating in the Father and reigning hierarchically in the freedom of the divine Persons. See *TD* IV, 76; and *ITC*, 212.

⁸⁷⁹ *DWH*, 145: Balthasar considers this insight to be “perhaps the most penetrating thing that we have from Henri de Lubac”. See Henri de Lubac’s *Le mystère du surnaturel* (Paris: F. Aubier, 1965).

⁸⁸⁰ *TD* 2, 275-76.

⁸⁸¹ John Paul II (*Threshold*, 64-65) concurs: “Faith affirms that God is omnipotent”; nonetheless, “aren’t we being presented with a sort of ‘divine impotence’...? Yes, in a certain sense one could say that *confronted with our*

is most crucial, because the disposition of divine love as leaving-free the beloved to an act of judgment is (at its deepest trinitarian roots) an *ad extra* function of the Father's leaving-free the Son, its purpose and capacity is to engender in the creature a mirroring disposition that would leave God free to father it by grace.

These features, accordingly, inform Balthasar's interpretation of the paschal mystery. Following him we can understand the Christ event to be the locus wherein the synthesis of God's expression of unlimited love (omnipotence) and God's unlimited allowance of a No over against him (impotence) reaches its apex. Inasmuch as the latter's intentionality refers wholly to the former, we are to see the divine allowance of sin as integrated into the ever greater work of divine revelation-salvation. Hence, Balthasar has us consider that if the Son's love is the consummate revelation of the love of the Father (Jn 14:9; 15:9), and if the boundlessness of this love entails a self-delivering-over to the power of sinners (Jn 10:18; Acts 2:23), it is precisely in order that, by his death and descent into Sheol, the Son accompany sinners "to the end" of sin's consequences.⁸⁸²

Such accompaniment can also be considered in terms of the Son's "representation" of sinners. Objectively, what occurs is an exchange of place in which "the estrangement of the sinful No is overtaken and encompassed by the [incarnate Son's] free-will, obedient Yes" before the Father; consequently, the Father's wrath against the sinful mis-judgment (rejection) of his love encounters in the Son a reciprocation of filial freedom (both divine and human) "that literally deprives it of its object".⁸⁸³ Indeed, what the Father encounters is a filial response of love--a filial

human freedom, God decided to make himself 'impotent'....Before this gift [of human freedom] he remains consistent and places himself before the judgment of man." Emphasis is the author's.

⁸⁸² See Balthasar, *TD* 4, 328-38. His viewpoint is supported once again by John Paul II, *Threshold*, 66, who writes: "'To the end' means [the Son's] accepting all the consequences of man's sin, taking it upon himself." And J. Ratzinger for his part asserts that "[the Son] himself entered into the distinctive freedom of sinners but went beyond it in that freedom of his own love which descended willingly into the Abyss"; *Eschatology*, 217.

⁸⁸³ *TD* 4, 349-50. See in addition *TD* IV, 258.

fiat or “judgment”--that he himself has begotten, and thus he judges the Son’s self-surrender to be the glorification of his divine Fatherhood (Jn 17:4-5).

Subjectively, that is, pertaining to what this divine work effects in the sinner, “the meaning and goal of representation...is to draw those who are being represented into the inner attitude of the one representing them” (Althaus).⁸⁸⁴ According to Althaus, it is the “inclusive” character of the Son’s representation of sinners (his self-sacrificial gesture for the sake of another) that has the power to draw the sinner “in his self-exclusion” to fellowship with Christ. Balthasar, for his part, not only agrees with Althaus on this point but enables us to supplement this explanation within the framework of his trinitarian theology as we have outlined it above. The efficacy of Christ’s representation in calling forth an assent from human freedom can then be seen as originating from the paternal font of the divine Trinity: from the Father’s unbegotten and archetypal mode of infinite freedom, the generative power of which is made manifest in the Son’s (engendered) self-giving-over on behalf of, and into the hands of, sinners.⁸⁸⁵ In a word: it is because the Son’s representation of the Father’s love underlies the Son’s representation of sinners that human freedom, confronted with the form of the Crucified in the “weakness” of his unreserved surrender, is persuaded to participate in his eternally begotten return of love to the Father--albeit by way of atonement. Doubtless this has a basis in Johannine theology, most notably in Jn 12:28-32 where Jesus understands that the “hour” in which sin is judged and overcome will serve to glorify the Father, “and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself”.

⁸⁸⁴ TD 4, 351. Balthasar is quoting P. Althaus, “Das Kreuz Christi” in *Theologische Aufsätze* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1929): 36. The assertion is echoed in *DWH*, 95-6: “God’s infinite love...must be accepted by that sinner, and acceptance means not only regarding it as true but behaving in a corresponding manner.”

⁸⁸⁵ TD 4, 450: “What is provocative in Jesus’ message is that he manifests the glory of divine power in lowliness, defenselessness and a self-surrender that goes to the lengths of the eucharistic Cross....This unveils a totally unexpected picture of God’s internal, trinitarian defenselessness: the wisdom of God that is folly yet wiser than the wisdom of men (1 Cor 1-2). Only thus can the Son really reveal the Father....Truth is unreserved self-surrender and hence the opening-up of the depths of the Father. Truth is the Son’s humility, which makes room for, and expresses, the whole sublimity of the Father’s love.”

Our next step is to bring this reinterpreted notion of divine omnipotence (a trinitarian-theocentric notion) to the inquiry concerning the possibility that all may be saved. Will human freedom “really resist to the end the representative assumption of its sins by its incarnate God?”⁸⁸⁶ How such a question can remain open-ended is due to the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness in the trinitarian mission of the Son (unbounded self-delivering-over and leaving-free) as it plays out under conditions appropriate to a revelatory work, and hence as involving the concomitant unity of manifestation and hiddenness. How such a question holds out hope for the prospect of universal salvation is due to the generative efficacy of absolute love’s modality of powerlessness to disarm the resistance of sin and simultaneously to empower human freedom to love.

With a reinterpreted notion of divine omnipotence in hand, and by way of acknowledging both eternal damnation and universal salvation as real possibilities, we can also approach the problems involved in setting up “distinctions within God’s will to grace”: between “a sufficient grace (*gratia sifficiens*), characterized as something that, from God’s viewpoint, would have to be sufficient for converting the sinner, yet is rejected” by human freedom; “and an efficacious grace (*gratia efficax*)” which effectively attains its goal, although not without the sinner’s freely given assent.⁸⁸⁷ Tentatively, we submit that an explication of these distinctions might be found by penetrating the (ultimately unsoundable) depths of the mystery of absolute love, insofar as the boundlessness of God’s self-giving-over is one with the boundlessness of his letting-be the beloved over against him. From this vantage point we can modify Balthasar’s proposal in *DWH* accordingly. “The Spirit of absolute freedom”, suggests Balthasar, “allows us to see, within our free spirit, what our own true freedom would be” by confronting us in some way with the exegesis

⁸⁸⁶ *DWH*, 208.

⁸⁸⁷ *DWH*, 208.

of the Father's love in his incarnate Word (Jn 1:18). "Grace can advance as far as that."⁸⁸⁸ *Sufficient* grace would then indicate that in its conclusive encounter with absolute freedom, human freedom is left free to dispose perversely of this very modality of God's initiatory love (namely, his "letting-be" an other)...unto a state of final separation from God. No longer would we consider God's will as regards "merely sufficient grace" to mean that infinite freedom, for its part, calculates and holds back in bestowing divine love upon some; to the contrary, sufficient grace would point to the unlimitedness of God's self-surrender under the aspect of its leaving-free. It would mean, besides, that in regard to this conclusive encounter human freedom must yet be situated in an arena in which God's latency remains operative; only so could finite freedom grasp to itself the gift of being left free as if to sever it from the gift of being loved. As for *efficacious* grace, it would indicate the power of God's unlimited self-surrender to effectively induce finite freedom to collaborate with divine love. In any event, these explanations would enable us to maintain that sin (and consequent perdition) is a work for which creaturely freedom is solely responsible, whereas salvation is a work for which God is primarily responsible, insofar as "it is God who is at work in us, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:12-13).⁸⁸⁹

Yet even as we grant the open-endedness of human freedom's situation under judgment, we must affirm nonetheless that the last word concerning the expression of God's Fatherhood in the economy of salvation belongs to the relationship between the Father and the incarnate Son, in which relationship we see the identity of omnipotence and powerlessness as it originates in paternal love to be generative of a divine-human filial correspondence that will culminate, at the end of time, in the Son's handing-over himself and all things to the Father, so that God may be all in all

⁸⁸⁸ DWH, 209. We can consider this proposal as offering Balthasar's reflections on the teaching of Vatican Council II that "the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the paschal mystery". *Gaudium et spes*, 22, #5. See CCC, #1260.

(1Cor 15:24-28). And if among all that is handed over by the Son there is included a human heart hardened against God, in such a case it may be that the omnipotent powerlessness of the trinitarian God is demonstrated in the freedom to endure all things as an expression of unsurpassable love.⁸⁹⁰

Space does not permit us to examine Balthasar's more problematic proposals concerning the moment of the human being's "conclusive encounter" with infinite freedom. That Balthasar delves into the matter is related to his recognition that, in some cases, the manifestation of the true face of divine love provokes a groundless hatred in the sinner. If this be so, where is the theologian to find reasons for hope that the sinner may yet be saved? At the risk of oversimplifying Balthasar's suggestions, let us say just this much: Balthasar considers hypothetically whether the judgment of each human being entails entering into the mystery of Holy Saturday in such a way that "the sinner, who wants to be 'damned' apart from God, finds God again in his loneliness, but *God in the absolute weakness of love* who unfathomably in the period of nontime enters into solidarity with those damning themselves".⁸⁹¹ The sinner's hardness of heart is "broken open", and a Yes is elicited from "the one who has chosen (or rather, believes he has chosen?) the complete

⁸⁸⁹ "The assent to such love...is not something that he [the human being] achieves by his own power. And yet the freedom to resist the creation of that assent, the freedom not to accept it as one's own, this freedom remains"; J. Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 216.

⁸⁹⁰ In the case that a sinner is lost, to say that God will be "all in all" cannot be understood as applying univocally to both the beatified and the damned. See Balthasar's explication in *TD IV*, 274-83. On God's side, Balthasar suggests, along with F. Ulrich, "'dass beide [Schmerz und Leid] innerste Lebenweisen der Liebe sind, verbürgt gerade die Schutzlosigkeit des Über-sich-verfügen-Lassens Jesu, das Lernen dessen, was der Sohn ewig ist, durch Gehorsam' (Ulrich). Damit ist aber auch die Ebene, auf der das Wort 'Tragödie' gültig ist--und dort in seiner Weise gültig bleibt--grundsätzlich überschritten. Denn das Umgreifende, innerhalb dessen sich das tragisch Erscheinende abspielt, ist in sich selber, so unbegreiflich dies für die Endlichkeit bleiben mag, ewige Seligkeit." *TD IV*, 222. J. Maritain thinks along these same lines. "Für Maritain gehört es zum unfasslichen Paradox der göttlichen Seligkeit (er unterscheidet also nicht wie Galot zwischen innerer, unberührbar Seligkeit und Weltbezug Gottes), dass 'ihre Flammen gleichzeitig die ewige Pracht des siegreichen Besitzes...und die ewige Pracht der siegreichen Hinnahme (acceptation) ist'." *TD IV*, 219; Balthasar cites from Maritain's, *Quelques réflexions sur le savoir théologique*, in *Rev. Thom.* 77 (1969), 5-27; abgedruckt in : *Approches sans Entraves* (hrsg. von E.R. Korn, Fayard, 1973), 292-326; here p. 312.

⁸⁹¹ *Rdr*, 153; emphasis mine. See in addition *TD IV*, 284-6. Edith Stein had already remarked that "we still do not know whether the decisive hour might not come for all...somewhere in the next world". *Welt und Person. Beitrag zum christlichen Wahrheitsstreben* (Freiburg, 1962), 158f. Quoted in *DWH*, 219.

loneliness of being only for oneself”.⁸⁹² Within the context of our present study, it is sufficient to acknowledge that even with respect to this suggestion Balthasar clearly founds his hope upon the all-powerful powerlessness of the triune God.

However, questions remain about Balthasar’s reflections which warrant further scrutiny. Does Balthasar give an adequate account of why the sinner’s opposition to God during his/her lifetime is overcome through this conclusive meeting with the Crucified? Since Balthasar does not want to allow for a conversion after death,⁸⁹³ are we to understand the sinner’s decisive encounter to occur “in dying”? A summary of this interpretation would run thus: insofar as dying is already embraced by the dimension of eschatological judgment, and because the latter is mediated by the Christ event, we can speculate whether in dying the sinner encounters Christ who, undergoing judgment *pro nobis*, died and descended into the realm of sin-conditioned death, such that through this encounter the dying sinner might be incited to accept God’s offer of mercy in Christ. Ratzinger, for example, has inquired “whether in this event we are in touch with a divine response able to draw freedom precisely as freedom to itself. The answer lies hidden in Jesus’ descent into Sheol.”⁸⁹⁴ As an alternative interpretation, does Balthasar regard the elicited assent to bespeak a retrieval and disclosure “after death”⁸⁹⁵ of a Yes already there, albeit hitherto suppressed by the sinner? But then can Balthasar be accused of trivializing the human being’s fundamental decision [*Grundwahl*] as it has been actualized through the choices made in the concrete situations of his/her life? Or are we to understand the Yes which is retrieved as the fundamental decision after all? Can this notion be justified? In what concerns the elicitation of this Yes from the sinner undergoing

⁸⁹² TD IV, 284.

⁸⁹³ See TD IV, 271.

⁸⁹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 217. I received clarification and confirmation of the “Balthasarian” interpretation of this hypothesis from conversation with Marc Ouellet, S.S.

⁸⁹⁵ See TD IV, 264-72, 286. Edith Stein had already remarked that “we still do not know whether the decisive hour might not come for all...somewhere in the next world”. *Welt und Person. Beitrag zum christlichen Wahrheitsstreben* (Freiburg, 1962), 158f. Quoted in *DWH*, 219.

judgment, does Balthasar provide a clear explanation of the co-incidence of (a) the divine latency required for a creaturely decision *and* (b) the absolute light of divine judgment at play?⁸⁹⁶ And in the end, does this second, alternative interpretation entirely avoid implying a conversion after death? These and other questions invite us to continued conversation with Balthasar's proposals.

e. Pastoral concerns

We ought not to conclude our discussion without addressing, however briefly, the pastoral concerns associated with the prospect of universal salvation. Balthasar takes seriously the objection that certain formulations of the prospect can lend support to a naive optimism about salvation.⁸⁹⁷ We noted above that some few of his own reflections are not entirely invulnerable to the criticism that sees human freedom, at least with respect to its fundamental decision, in danger of being trivialized. These problematic points notwithstanding, Balthasar's overall approach is aimed at accentuating the gravity of the decisions taken by human freedom precisely in view of its being encountered by a divine self-disposing of the utmost seriousness. In his words: "The seriousness that we are confronted with is the seriousness of a love that goes beyond punitive justice";⁸⁹⁸ it is, ultimately, "the power of self-giving love that speaks in tones of implacable judgment".⁸⁹⁹ "Love itself, as the utmost gift, is also the utmost demand."⁹⁰⁰

Consequently, rather than undermining human responsibility, this perspective underscores the accountability of finite freedom in its vocation to be made perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect (Mt 5:48). According to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, what constitutes the Father's perfection is a love that offers itself to the good and the wicked without distinction (vv. 43-47).

⁸⁹⁶ See *TD* IV, 267.

⁸⁹⁷ See *DWH*, 163-64.

⁸⁹⁸ *DWH*, 176.

⁸⁹⁹ *TD* 2, 35. Likewise John Paul II maintains: "Before all else, it is Love that judges. God, who is love, judges through love. It is Love that demands [our] purification." John Paul II, *Threshold*, 187.

Finite freedom is called to imitate divine love's disposition of nondistinction in regard to others ("love your enemies"), even as it is urged to distinguish sharply any sinful tendencies in regard to itself (vv. 28-30). Balthasar also has us consider once again Jesus' parable of the Final Judgment in Mt 25. Here the motif of "nondistinction" becomes specifically Christological: the criteria by which we are judged lies in the extent to which we have lived out the disposition of love exhibited by Jesus as he identifies himself with the least of his brethren. In Jesus this disposition attains its acme with his passion and death when, before the Father, he assumes a condition of nondistinction from sinners. "The main concern" of this parable, says Balthasar, "is the requirement for...emulation of absolute and unrelenting love as Jesus himself exemplifies this."⁹⁰¹ Since Church teaching allows for a universal scope to Christian hope, should we not regard as of primary concern the requirement to practice this virtue in a manner as unrelenting as our Christian love? Fittingly, it is the saints who provide us testimony of how hope borne by love can bring the believer to partake, in the most radical way conceivable, in the paschal mystery of Christ. Ratzinger joins Balthasar in drawing this to our attention, as he writes:

For the saints, "Hell" is not so much a threat to be hurled at other people but a challenge to oneself. It is a challenge to suffer in the dark night of faith, to experience communion with Christ in solidarity with his descent into the Night. ...One serves the salvation of the world by leaving one's own salvation behind for the sake of others. In such piety, nothing of the dreadful reality of Hell is denied. Hell is so real that it reaches right into the existence of the saints. Hope can take it on, only if one shares in the suffering of Hell's night by the side of the One who came to transform our night by his suffering. Here hope does not emerge from the neutral logic of a system....It must place its petition into the hands of its Lord and leave it there.⁹⁰²

⁹⁰⁰ DWH, 41.

⁹⁰¹ DWH, 31.

⁹⁰² J. Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 217-18. Ratzinger's remarks provide an opportunity to clarify the matter of the Church's affirmation of the reality of hell. How are we to understand this teaching? Or perhaps better put: what interpretations are permissible in regard to it? Granted that the Church refrains from claiming to know with certainty whether any human being has or will in fact freely and definitively exclude him-/herself from communion with God and, in this sense, realize "this state...called 'hell'" (CCC, #1033), nonetheless, we can speak of the reality of hell in other respects. For the Church does claim certain knowledge, based on Scripture, that Satan and the "fallen" angels have "irrevocably rejected God and his reign" (CCC, #392). Furthermore, diabolical power is a real and active

It is worthy of mention that if the saints “serve the salvation of the world by leaving their own salvation behind” (that is, their sonship by grace) “for the sake of sinners”, they do so precisely in being born of God together with Christ and so in imaging the Father who always already leaves his Fatherhood of grace in the hands of sinners wholly for sinners’ sake.

Thus, looking back upon the Scriptural foundations, the doctrinal parameters, as well as the demands of Christian holiness as Balthasar presents them to our view, there appears good reason to re-pose our original question to read: Dare we *not* hope “that all be saved”?...insofar as our setting a limit may indicate that we, like the elder son in the parable of the prodigally merciful father, do not accept unreservedly the God of Jesus Christ, or that we do not wish to go the distance in witnessing to the absolute love revealed in the Christ event.

presence in human history, reaching back to humankind’s primeval state and, thereafter, into the sin-marred order of human existence. And with respect to the latter, the Church teaches that “we are all born afflicted [with] a sin which is the ‘death of the soul’”, inasmuch as the state of human nature inherited by every human being is deprived of original holiness and justice (*CCC*, #403-4; see *DS* 1512); in terms of human personhood we can speak of this state as a disruption in the dialogical relationship between human freedom and God (and, consequently, between fellow human beings). Without the grace of Christ, this sin-conditioned state (*peccatum originale originatum*) and every personal act of sin which ratifies it could only result in a death that means separation from God (*CCC* #602). It was for this reason--to destroy the works of the devil--that the Son of God appeared. From this perspective, Balthasar suggests that we consider the very source of redemptive grace as entailing Christ’s descent into Hades/Sheol in representative assumption of the situation of all humankind who, under judgment as the progeny of the “First Adam”, is tending (in absence of the Christ event) toward the realm of death in deprivation of the vision of God. Since, moreover, Christ’s mission recapitulates the *concrete entirety* of human history (including whatever resistance to Christological grace I exhibit in my life), we may also consider St. Thomas’ argument that the necessity for Christ’s descent into Hades “lies in the fact that Christ has assumed all the *defectus* of sinners” (*In Libros Sententiarum* III, d 22, q. 2, a. 1, q. 3). In the view of Balthasar and Ratzinger, Christ’s assumption of all the *defectus* of sinners as an act of supreme love involves his sharing (in an analogous manner) the alienation from the divine Father to which sin inevitably leads (*CCC* #603). And if the reality of sin’s consequences reaches into the existence of Christ in this way, then those who follow the Lord closely may be permitted to share in this Christological mystery. These few comments are enough to give some indication of the multifaceted dimensions to the reality of hell: from the actually realized and everlasting state of demonic perdition, to the universal human condition (post-lapsarian) that really stood in need of the redemptive mission of Christ, to every “mortal” sin whose inmost disposition is really a refusal of communion with God, to the everlasting perdition that is a real possibility for me if I do not finally accept the redeeming grace of Christ.

One last clarification: when the new *Catechism* echoes the Council of Rome in teaching that Christ, by his descent into Sheol, frees “the just who had gone before him” (*CCC*, #633; see *DS* 587), it must be kept in mind that “the just” have been rendered so precisely by virtue of the grace issuing from the Son’s death, descent, and resurrection, which grace is extended to every human being of every time and place (see *CCC*, #634). What is ruled out, however, is conceiving that Christ descended into Sheol “to deliver the damned, or to destroy the hell of damnation” (*CCC*, #633)--which means, as we have repeatedly maintained, that we cannot interpret the redemptive effects of Christ’s descent as extending to the “fallen” angels, nor (concerning *human* freedom to which the grace of the redemption *does* extend) as

IV

Balthasar and His Contemporaries: towards a doctrine of the trinitarian Father

A. Introduction

According to the testimony of Scripture, it is through the paschal event of Jesus Christ that the trinitarian essence of God is definitively revealed. Theological reflection over the centuries, however, has not sufficiently taken into account the interconnection between the mystery of the Cross and the mystery of the Trinity. But in recent times, as Anne Hunt remarks, “what has been deferred is now [re-]appearing, emerging indeed as essential data, even of basic analogical importance for trinitarian thinking....The death and resurrection of Jesus are being raised to the level of properly ‘theological’ meaning and significance.”⁹⁰³

Looking back to the infancy of the Christian theological tradition, we find that trinitarian doctrine took shape in the context of the theological controversies of the fourth century. The ecumenical councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381) addressed the question: Are Jesus and the Spirit coequal in divinity with the Father? In answering affirmatively, the Council Fathers based their profession of faith upon the activity of Jesus and the Spirit in salvation history: they

making it impossible for human beings to refuse to correspond to God’s saving love unto their own perdition, nor as providing the possibility of conversion after death.

reasoned that since this activity--effecting redemption and sanctification--is proper to God alone, then Jesus is "God from God" who together with the Spirit is to be worshipped and glorified in unity with the Father. At this stage of theological reflection, the formulations concerning the mystery of the Trinity were directly grounded in the Christ event, even if the conceptual bridge between the Cross and the Trinity remained relatively undeveloped.

Thereafter, consideration of the Trinity endeavored to make understandable the divine being *ad intra*. Medieval theologians took up the project of conceiving how God in himself can be one and three, absolute and relational, and so forth. In the process, they developed a highly refined metaphysical conception of the eternal and immanent Trinity, albeit without direct and explicit reference to the paschal mystery. Following Augustine, the scholastics were inclined to approach the construction of trinitarian doctrine from the point of departure of psychological analogies of the Trinity⁹⁰⁴ rather than from the historical realization of the action between the Father and the incarnate Son united by the Spirit. For his part, Thomas Aquinas transformed Augustine's psychological analogies into a conception of God as the perfection of spiritual being.

Aquinas arrives at an analogy for the divine processions in terms of the acts of knowing and loving, which are proper to the pure act of being. He thus moves from psychological acts to a consideration of being and grounds the inner-trinitarian relationality in being itself. The psychological analogy is then metaphysically grounded and the resultant relationality is ontological. But see how very remote these trinitarian reflections are from the biblical data concerning the actual events of salvation history at this point.⁹⁰⁵

⁹⁰³ A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 2.

⁹⁰⁴ "Rooted in the biblical understanding of the human person as created in the image of God, [Augustine's] search for trinitarian analogies, all drawn from reflection on the self-conscious subject, passed through memory, knowledge, and love (*mens, notitia, amor*), to memory, knowledge, and love of self (*mens meminit sui, intelligit se, diligit se*), and culminated in the image of the human self in the activity of remembering God, understanding God, and willing or loving God (*memoria Dei, intelligentia Dei, amor in Deum*)....Augustine's analogies exercised a decisive influence on Latin theology. They were transmitted in succinct form by Peter Lombard, who gathered them together in his *Liber Sententiarum*." A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 2. See Augustine's *De Trinitate*, IX (1-7), X (17-19), and XIV (11-21).

⁹⁰⁵ A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 4. See Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I, q. 27.

In this respect, a “theocentric” doctrine of God developed in relative isolation from soteriology. As for soteriology (a theology of the Cross), during the Middle Ages the focus was almost exclusively on the redemptive effect of the Cross rather than on how this event served God’s self-revelation.

Manuals of theology during the neo-scholastic period crystallized the medieval-scholastic treatment of the Trinity, which meant perpetuating the tendency to isolate it from the rest of the Christian mysteries: not only by virtually confining the doctrine to one section of the manual, but also by confining reflection on the Trinity to God’s eternal inner-divine life. In short, the manuals of theology formulated trinitarian doctrine in such a way that what receded into the background and gradually became lost to view was the interconnection between the mystery of the Trinity and the Cross of Christ.

The question then arises as to when and how the interconnection re-entered the horizon of theology. We can offer here no more than an abbreviated reply. To be sure, since the early nineteenth century Protestant thought in particular has been markedly influenced by Hegel’s notion of a “speculative Good Friday” in terms of which Hegel reconstructed trinitarian doctrine. For Hegel, what Christian tradition had designated as the “immanent” Trinity (God in himself) refers to a moment in which the Absolute Spirit is lacking in the seriousness of a conscious experience of the negative. An idea of God according to which the divine essence consists in an eternally enclosed act of self-love limits God to the fate of an “inert solitude”, to a state less perfect than the man Jesus for whom “there is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13). A God who “in himself” is ignorant of suffering and death will not do.⁹⁰⁶ Absolute Spirit must undergo the experience of death (in what is human and finite, fragile and weak) in order to

⁹⁰⁶ Balthasar in *TD IV*, 204: “Der Akzent aber liegt darauf, dass ein Absolutes, das das reale Leiden und Sterben nicht kennt, ‘das leblose Einsame’ ist (see *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 612), das als ‘Göttliches’, die Erfahrung des Sterbens machen muss, um als das Lebendig-Göttliche zu leben.” In *ibid.*, 202, Balthasar quotes the following from *Phänomenologie*: “Das Leben Gottes und das göttliche Erkennen mag also wohl als ein Spielen der

exist as a living divinity.⁹⁰⁷ Accordingly, Hegel understands the event of the Cross to be the supreme (representative) moment which the divine nature necessarily undergoes in order to realize itself: it is a question of the Trinity inextricably linked to the Cross.⁹⁰⁸ At the risk of oversimplifying, Hegel's philosophical system can be regarded as an offshoot of the Lutheran sensibility that "if God sat all alone in heaven, like a bump on a log, he would not be God".⁹⁰⁹

We need not spell out once again Balthasar's rejection of the Hegelian/Process conception of God. (See within this study chapter II, section F; and chapter III, sections B and G.)⁹¹⁰ It suffices to note Balthasar's effort to vindicate theocentrism *in light of* the Cross of Christ without, as he puts it, "lumping together" the internal divine processions with the process of salvation history.⁹¹¹ "A way must be found to see the immanent Trinity as the ground of the world process (including the crucifixion) in such a manner that it is...not entangled in the world process", which way would require theological reflection to advance beyond neo-scholasticism's approach to

Liebe mit sich selbst ausgesprochen werden; diese Idee sinkt zur Erbaulichkeit und Fadheit herab, wenn der Ernst, der Schmerz, die Geduld und Arbeit des Negativen darin fehlt." (See *WW II* Hanser, 1959, 266.)

⁹⁰⁷ Hegel, *Philosophie der Religion*, 253: "'Gott selber ist tot' heisst es in einem lutherischen Liede; damit ist das Bewusstsein ausgedrückt, dass das Menschliche, Endliche, Gebrechliche, die Schwäche, das Negative göttliches Moment selbst ist, dass es in Gott selbst ist, dass das Anderssein, die Endlichkeit, das Negative, nicht ausser Gott ist...Es ist das Anderssein, das Negative gewusst als Moment der göttlichen Natur selbst. Die höchste Idee des Geistes ist darin enthalten." Quoted by Balthasar in *TD IV*, 204.

⁹⁰⁸ "Nämlich die Idee der Trinität", says Balthasar, "die damit unlöslich an das Kreuz und den Tod Christi gebunden wird--von welchem offenbleibt, wie weit er als das einmalige historische Ereignis oder aber als die notwendige höchste 'Vorstellung' des allgemeinsten Gesetzes des Seins aufzufassen ist." *TD IV*, 204.

⁹⁰⁹ See K. Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche* (New York: Anchor, 1967), 337. Hans Küng has this to say about Hegel's notion of divine paternity: "The speculative meaning of the divine paternity refers to the self-externalizing implicit substance, the divine Being; if the divine paternity is implied, the human maternity is actual--meaning the self-externalizing actual self-consciousness of man. [Quoting Hegel from *Phänomenologie*, 457:] 'Of the Spirit, which has abandoned the form of substance and enters existence in the shape of self-consciousness, it may therefore be said...that it has an actual mother but an implicit father....This then is how we are to understand the credal statements "begotten of the Father before all the worlds" and "incarnate of the virgin Mary".' H. Küng, *The Incarnation of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 208.

⁹¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion of Balthasar's opposition to Process philosophy and theology, see G.F. O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*, especially chapter 4; John J. O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), especially chapter 10; J. J. Mueller, "Process Theology and the Catholic Theological Community", *TS*, 47 (1986) 412-27; Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Change? The Word's Becoming in the Incarnation* (Still River, Mass: St. Bede, 1985).

⁹¹¹ *TD 4*, 322: "Interpretations of this kind [such as Hegel's and Moltmann's], like all talk of God's suffering, become inevitable wherever the internal divine process, 'procession', is lumped together with the process of salvation history. Thus God is entangled in the world process and becomes a mythological God."

trinitarian doctrine, on the one hand, while on the other hand the path to be taken must avoid the extreme stances of Process theology.⁹¹² In addition, and of equal importance for Balthasar, the eternal tri-Personal self-surrender that constitutes the immanent Trinity must be understood to be “that than which nothing greater can be thought”...greater even than the historical drama in which the Trinity involves itself “for us” in enduring separation, suffering, and death (see 1Jn 3:16). Indeed, precisely on the basis of a theology of the Cross Balthasar extrapolates towards a notion of God’s inner-trinitarian essence which, far from warranting being characterized pejoratively as an “inert solitude”, can be viewed as the “primal drama” that founds the possibility of the dramatic character of human history. Whatever in our finite experience makes self-communication “earnest” such as risk-taking and death (“laying down one’s life”) is a creaturely image of the utterly positive seriousness of unlimited self-expropriation between the Persons of the eternal Trinity--which we learn in virtue of the mission of the incarnate Son.⁹¹³ Consequently, it seems to us that the legitimate concerns indicated by Hegel’s reconstitution of trinitarian theology are integrated in Balthasar’s approach without jeopardy to biblical revelation; a case in point, as we have seen, is Balthasar’s conception of the unity of immutability and affectivity originating in the inner-divine Paternity.

As for the state of Roman Catholic trinitarian theology during the nineteenth century, neo-scholasticism continued to predominate. Yet in the work of Matthias Scheeben one can detect a

⁹¹² Balthasar continues: “The immanent Trinity must be understood to be that eternal, absolute self-surrender whereby God is seen to be, in himself, absolute love; this in turn explains his free self-giving to the world as love, without suggesting that God ‘needed’ the world process and the Cross in order to become himself.” *TD* 4, 322.

⁹¹³ *TD* 4, 325: “The Son is...the infinitely Other of the Father. Thus he both grounds and surpasses all we mean by separation, pain, and alienation in the world and all we can envisage in terms of loving self-giving, inter-personal relationship and blessedness. He is not the direct identity of the two but their presupposition, sovereignly surpassing them. Hence, too, he is not the mere foundation of a potential ‘history of God’, a God who would achieve unity through the pain involved in ‘bifurcation’: he is the concrete, complete presupposition (‘prepositing’) of this bifurcation.”

hint of the reappearance in theological reflection of the interconnection between the paschal event and the mystery of the Trinity. In the view of Anne Hunt,

Scheeben's treatment of the Cross to some degree anticipates the contemporary emphasis on the place of the Cross in trinitarian life. Suggesting that "the idea of Christ's sacrifice thrusts its roots deep into the abyss of the Trinity",⁹¹⁴ Scheeben describes "Christ's sacrifice in the very form in which it is actually offered, namely in the shedding of his blood to the last drop, as the highest expression of the trinitarian relations and the most perfect vehicle of their extension to the outer world".⁹¹⁵ Scheeben thus recognizes the *double* significance of the sacrifice of the Cross, that the death and resurrection of Jesus are both the consummation of the [economically prolonged] act of the divine relationality *and* the act by which creation is incorporated within the inner-trinitarian life.⁹¹⁶

Despite Scheeben's insights, theological construction of a conceptual bridge between the mysteries of the Cross and the Trinity was not undertaken until well into the twentieth century. The task would be prompted finally by the biblical renewal movement among Catholic circles and what has been called "réssourcement" theology, as well as by developments in a scripturally-inspired personalist ontology.⁹¹⁷ That progress has already been made to a significant extent is evidenced by J. Ratzinger's assertions in his article "Jesus Christ today":

He who sees Christ truly sees the Father...."The surrender to the formlessness of death makes the love of the Father visible....The Crucified One is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15)." ...Therefore he who sees Christ, the Crucified One, sees the Father, and the entire trinitarian mystery. For we must add, when one sees the Father in Christ, then in him the veil of the temple is truly rent, and the interior of God is laid bare.⁹¹⁸

Given the focus of our study, it is not inconsequential that *both* the mystery of the immanent Trinity and the Fatherhood of God are unveiled in the Crucified Christ, as Ratzinger acknowledges. For if,

⁹¹⁴ Matthias J. Scheeben, *op. cit.*, 446.

⁹¹⁵ Matthias J. Scheeben, *op. cit.*, 445.

⁹¹⁶ A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 6; emphasis author's. For Balthasar's commendation of Scheeben's theology, see *GL* 1, 104-17.

⁹¹⁷ See Yves Congar, *A History of Theology*, ed. and tr. by Hunter Guthrie (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1968), 12-17; and A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 6. One could also mention here the influence which German and English "kenoticist" theology had within the context of modern Protestant theology.

⁹¹⁸ J. Ratzinger, "Jesus Christ today", *Communio* 17 (Spring, 1990), 80-81, with inner citations from C. Schönborn's work, *Die Christus Ikon* (Schaffhausen, 1984), 96-97.

over the centuries, theological reflection on the Trinity tended to separate consideration of God in himself from God who loves “to the end” in the Christ event, theological reflection also tended to leave the Father to the remoteness of heaven whereas Christology and Pneumatology became doctrinal specializations in their own right.

Benefiting, then, from a renewed awareness of the relation between the Cross and the Trinity, contemporary Roman Catholic theology is being prompted to ask: (i) What light is cast on “the interior of God” when considered from the vantage point of the death and resurrection of Jesus? (ii) Even more specifically, what light is cast on God the Father when we consider God’s Paternity from the vantage point of the paschal event? Thus far in our study we have examined the doctrine of the trinitarian Father which emerges from Balthasar’s “theodramatic theory”, especially in respect of his “dramatic soteriology”. In what follows our aim will be to facilitate a critical assessment of this Balthasarian theology of the Fatherhood of God by situating it in relation to other contemporary treatments. We will limit our selection to recent works devoted to the topic of God’s Paternity submitted by Roman Catholic theologians. These works will be considered insofar as they relate to Balthasar’s ideas; no claim is made to offering a comprehensive analysis.

B. John Paul II

Early in his pontificate, John Paul II composed a triad of encyclicals as a means to rendering the trinitarian mystery of God more relevant to believers living in the final decades of the twentieth century.⁹¹⁹ To this end, the encyclicals exhibit a concern to underscore the anthropocentric character of God’s self-revelation, a concern which is the trademark, so to speak, of modern theological discourse. “[W]e know God above all in his relationship of love for man: in his

⁹¹⁹ *The Redeemer of Man (Redemptor hominis)* Apostolic Letter, March 4, 1979; *On the Mercy of God (Dives in misericordia)* Apostolic Letter, November 13, 1980; and *On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World*

‘philanthropy’”.⁹²⁰ Even so, the pontiff expressly distances himself from every current of thought which tends to separate--or worse yet, sets in opposition--anthropocentrism and theocentrism. Along with Balthasar, John Paul II emphasizes the “organic” link between God-for-us and God-in-himself.⁹²¹ But whereas Balthasar makes every effort to extrapolate from the temporal missions to the eternal processions, John Paul II generally confines his reflections to the realm of the divine economy in order, as he says, to enrich the Church’s consciousness that “man and man’s lofty calling are revealed in Christ *through* the revelation of the Father and his love”--here alluding to the celebrated statement in *Gaudium et spes*.⁹²²

An exposition of this theme from the standpoint of the self-disclosure of God the Father is presented in his second encyclical, *On the Mercy of God (Dives in Misericordia)*. John Paul II takes as his point of departure the declaration of the Johannine Jesus: “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). The Person of Jesus Christ is the locus wherein the Person of the Father is definitively made known.⁹²³ In affirming that “by [his] actions and words Christ makes the Father present among men”,⁹²⁴ John Paul II is summarily identifying the linchpin in the Johannine theology of revelation.⁹²⁵ Not to be overlooked here is the pontiff’s implicit confirmation of a fundamental principle of Balthasar’s theodramatic theory: “namely, that theological persons cannot be defined in isolation from their dramatic action”.⁹²⁶ John Paul II undoubtedly agrees with Balthasar that, in Jesus, person and mission coincide. This accounts for his assertion that on the

(*Dominum et Vivificantem*) Apostolic Letter, May 18, 1986 (all three are Vatican translations from Vatican Polyglot Press).

⁹²⁰ *On the Mercy of God (Dives in misericordia)*, I, 2, p. 9. Henceforth, *DM*.

⁹²¹ See *DM*, I, 1, p. 8.

⁹²² *DM*, I, 1, p. 8, emphasis is author’s; see Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), no. 22.

⁹²³ See *DM*, I, 1-2, pp. 7-9.

⁹²⁴ *DM*, II, 3, p. 11.

⁹²⁵ See also Col 1:15 and Heb 1:3.

⁹²⁶ *TD* 3, 508. In confirming Balthasar’s principle, John Paul remains in accord with the central ideas that mark his own position in philosophical anthropology. See his work *The Acting Person*.

Cross Jesus “fully accomplished his mission...[and] at the same time fully realized Himself”.⁹²⁷ And if the mission of Jesus *is* making the Father present, it can also be said that “God’s fatherly love reached its culmination in the Son’s cross, death, and resurrection”.⁹²⁸ Accordingly, for John Paul II, “believing in the crucified Son means ‘seeing the Father’”.⁹²⁹ “The Paschal Mystery is Christ at the summit of the revelation of the inscrutable mystery of God. It is precisely then that the words pronounced in the Upper Room are completely fulfilled: ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father’.”⁹³⁰

But if John Paul II concurs with Balthasar in maintaining that the believer’s definitive understanding of “the inscrutable mystery of God”--and, as inherently concomitant, that of God’s Fatherhood--is obtained on the basis of the Father’s act of sending which culminates in the Son’s laying down of his life, nonetheless John Paul makes no attempt to elucidate the dialogical dynamic which unfolds between the paternal act of sending and its exegetical counterpart in the Son’s surrender of his life. Nowhere does he give an analysis of the reciprocal relationship between the Father and the Son which propounds, for example, that the Son in knowing the Father’s love with its various modalities such as kenotic self-surrender, leaving-free, powerlessness, and affectivity is being begotten in the temporal order as a function of his eternal procession. This lacuna in his treatment notwithstanding, John Paul offers a conception of the Paternity of God in terms of its representation in the dramatic form of the Crucified One which conception corresponds in many respects to Balthasar’s theology of God the Father as it has been gleaned in our study from his trinitarian doctrine.

⁹²⁷ *On the Christian Meaning of Suffering (Salvifici doloris)*. Apostolic Letter, February 11, 1984 (Vatican translation from Vatican Polyglot Press) no. 22.

⁹²⁸ *DM*, VIII, 15, p. 48.

⁹²⁹ *DM*, V, 7, p. 26.

⁹³⁰ *DM*, V, 8, p. 29.

Of the many issues pertaining to the trinitarian Father on which John Paul II and Balthasar agree, perhaps the most controversial is the question of divine “suffering”. Consistent with his concern to maintain a balance between anthropocentrism and theocentrism, John Paul II points out, on the one hand, the unwavering intention of the “Father of mercies” (2Cor 1:3) to be “particularly close to man, especially when man is suffering”.⁹³¹ In and through the One Sent, the Father’s self-communication comes “in contact with suffering, injustice, and poverty--in contact with the whole historical human condition”,⁹³² just as, metaphorically speaking, in and through the actor’s stage performance a “revelation” takes place in which the audience recognizes that the dramatic poet has initiated a real communication with the audience precisely by entering into its human experience and addressing it.⁹³³ On the other hand, that is, on God’s side, since “the whole historical human condition” to which the Father addresses himself is marred by sin, freely coming into contact with it means that the Father allows himself to suffer, to be hurt and offended by his creatures.⁹³⁴ For John Paul II, as for Balthasar, that the Father allows himself to be affected by the free response of human beings to his advances of love is due, in the first place, to the utter selflessness (which presupposes the unconditioned freedom) of God’s generative activity. The action of the Father in sending his only Son to enter into the uttermost consequences of human sin bespeaks his “fidelity to himself” which as such is “totally concentrated upon humanity”.⁹³⁵ What is uncovered by the Christ event is “the depth of that love which does not recoil at the extraordinary sacrifice of the

⁹³¹ *DM*, I, 2, p. 10: “The truth, revealed in Christ, about the ‘Father of mercies’ enables us to ‘see’ him as particularly close to man, especially when man is suffering.” In addition, *ibid.*, V, 7, p. 25: “The suffering Christ speaks in a special way to man. The nonbeliever will also be able to discover in him the eloquence of solidarity with the human lot.”

⁹³² *DM*, II, 3, p. 12.

⁹³³ See Balthasar, *TD* 1, 262, 268, 307.

⁹³⁴ *DM*, IV, 5-6, p. 20-21: “In the parable of the prodigal son,...the son had not only squandered the part of the inheritance belonging to him but had also *hurt and offended his father*....It was bound to make him [the father] suffer....There is no doubt that in this simple but penetrating analogy the figure of the father reveals to us God as Father.” Emphasis author’s.

⁹³⁵ *DM*, IV, 6, p. 21.

Son, in order to satisfy the fidelity of the Creator and Father toward human beings, created in his image and chosen ‘from the beginning’, in this Son, for grace and glory”.⁹³⁶

John Paul II and Balthasar are also of the same mind that the uncovering of “this inscrutable and indescribable fatherly ‘pain’” serves to engender in the sinner a conversion of heart.⁹³⁷ The efficacy of the mystery of redemption in convincing the world concerning sin (see Jn 16:8-9) must entail “*revealing the pain*, unimaginable and inexpressible, on account of sin” which Scripture (notwithstanding certain anthropomorphic formulations) “seems to glimpse in the ‘depths of God’ and in a certain sense in the very heart of the ineffable Trinity”.⁹³⁸ “If sin caused suffering, now the pain of God in Christ crucified acquires...its full human expression....[I]n Christ there suffers a God who has been rejected by his own creature; but at the same time, in the depth of this suffering...love is at work, that love which brings man back again to share in the life that is God himself.”⁹³⁹ We have already noted that John Paul II does not move on to develop a conception of the immanent Trinity as the transcendental theological condition for the possibility of the Christ event, even as he confirms the interconnection in principle. Regarding the issue at hand, he expressly affirms that the “fatherly ‘pain’” made manifest in God’s Son and interpreter is such as to exclude any intimation of ontological deficiency. He is equally firm in holding that the economic modality of this paternal affectivity corresponds to “the inscrutable intimacy” between the divine Persons in the inner-trinitarian life.⁹⁴⁰ But it is left to others to take up the task of shedding light on the ontological coherence between the “Father who feels compassion for man, as though sharing his pain”,⁹⁴¹ who

⁹³⁶ *DM*, V, 7, p. 23.

⁹³⁷ See *On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World (Dominum et Vivificantem)*, II, 4, 39, p. 69. Henceforth, *DV*.

⁹³⁸ *DV*, II, 4, 39, p. 68; emphasis author’s.

⁹³⁹ *DV*, II, 4, 41, p. 74.

⁹⁴⁰ “What corresponds, in the inscrutable intimacy of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, to this ‘offence’...? The concept of God as the necessarily most perfect being certainly excludes from God any pain deriving from deficiencies”; *DV*, II, 4, 39, p. 69.

⁹⁴¹ *DV*, II, 4, 39, p. 69.

feels compassion moreover for the Son he surrenders to sinners,⁹⁴² and the eternal Father who in generating his consubstantial Thou passes over into the other's place (the paternal *kenosis*) there to dwell in infinite com-"passion" (the trinitarian *perichoresis*), as Balthasar suggests.

Closely related to John Paul II's understanding of God's "fatherly 'pain'" is his perception of what Balthasar calls the all-powerful powerlessness of divine love. Here too we find that John Paul, like Balthasar, underscores the evocative efficacy of a love sufficiently mighty to render itself impotent.⁹⁴³ In the pontiff's reflections, the all-powerful powerlessness of the Father's love is interpreted primarily in terms of divine mercy. Inasmuch as "the love-mercy" of the Father is embodied in the Son who "gives of himself and permits...that he be bound, that he be beaten and crucified",⁹⁴⁴ "the Father", says John Paul, "invites man to have 'mercy' on his only Son, the Crucified One....Christ, precisely as the Crucified One,...without restricting [human] freedom, seeks to draw from this very freedom love...which is a kind of 'mercy' shown by each one of us to the Son of the eternal Father."⁹⁴⁵ John Paul's insight into the power of mercy's modality of powerlessness to move the one addressed to an imaging response expands the interpretation given to this fundamental dynamic of Christological revelation: by virtue of the mercy shown by the Father in Christ, humanity is called and enabled to be perfect as the Father is perfect.⁹⁴⁶

Overall it seems to us that the salient points of what may be considered John Paul II's theology of God the Father are wholly consonant with the thought of Balthasar, even as John Paul

⁹⁴² See *DM*, V, 8, p. 28.

⁹⁴³ Consider that "the cross of Christ is witness to the strength of evil against the very Son of God. ...Believing in the crucified Son means 'seeing the Father'...that is, the specific manner in which love is revealed and effected vis-à-vis the reality of evil." *DM*, V, 8, p. 26.

⁹⁴⁴ *Threshold*, 10-11.

⁹⁴⁵ *DM*, V, 8, p. 28.

⁹⁴⁶ *DM*, II, 3, p. 13: "[I]n revealing the love-mercy of God, [Christ] at the same time demanded from people that they should also be guided in their lives by love and mercy." And *ibid.*, *DM*, VII, 13, pp. 40-41: "Conversion to God always consists in discovering his [the Father's] mercy....Conversion to God is always the fruit of the 'rediscovery' of this Father, who is rich in mercy. Authentic knowledge of the God of mercy...is a constant and inexhaustible source

leaves to others the speculative endeavor of rendering explicit, examining, and developing in systematic (or at least schematic) fashion the many facets of the mystery of God's Fatherhood lying dormant in his own reflections. Indeed, even in this respect John Paul and Balthasar are much alike in that Balthasar himself, albeit to a lesser extent, has left to others a similar endeavor--hence the purpose of this study.

C. François X. Durrwell

In the preface to his study, *Le Père: Dieu en son mystère*, Durrwell indicates that his work represents a shift in theological method.⁹⁴⁷ Rather than reasoning about God according to philosophical categories and systems, Durrwell wishes to let himself be wholly guided by the conceptual expressions of the Christian mysteries as they are given in Sacred Scripture. The result is a work of biblical theology which falls somewhere between the procedures of strict exegesis and traditional systematic theology. We agree with Anne Hunt that among the gains achieved in Durrwell's approach is that he reconnects trinitarian theology with the biblical data. On the basis of Gal 1:1 and Acts 13:32f., for example, Durrwell effectively reclaims the properly *theo*-logical significance of Jesus' resurrection such that the paschal mystery in its entirety serves as an analogy of the Trinity.⁹⁴⁸ And like Balthasar and John Paul II, Durrwell is guided by the biblical testimony which understands the paschal event of Jesus Christ as the culmination of the incarnation. For Durrwell, the question is not "whether the incarnation *or* the paschal mystery achieves our

of conversion...as a permanent attitude. Those who came to know God in this way, who 'see' him in this way, can live only in a state of being continually converted to him."

⁹⁴⁷ François-Xavier Durrwell, *Le Père. Dieu en son mystère* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1988), 7-9. Henceforth, *PDM*. In addition see the Foreword to the first edition of *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study*, translated by Rosemary Sheed (London: Sheed and Ward, 1960), xxiii-xxvi. Also see *Holy Spirit of God: An Essay in Biblical Theology*, translated by Benedict Davies (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), viii.

⁹⁴⁸ As Durrwell sees it, "the mystery [of the Trinity] is given paradigmatically, indeed iconically, in the resurrection: the resurrection is the locus for an understanding of the mystery of the Trinity. It reveals the divine Persons in relation to each other, their hypostatic characteristics, proper roles, and distinctive missions". A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 28.

salvation, but how in the Easter passover of Christ the eternal begetting of the Word is fully accomplished within creation, to be its consummation and final form”.⁹⁴⁹ Accordingly, Durrwell situates and explicates the mystery of the Trinity in a soteriological context without allowing the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity to collapse.⁹⁵⁰

As is the case with Balthasar, Durrwell’s reflections on the mystery of the trinitarian Father are centered upon the Christ event. Precisely here the Paternity of God in relation to his Son is fully revealed and realized in the economy. The “gospel of God” (Rom 1:1) is the good news of a God and Father who begets, for us, his Son in the world. If Balthasar focuses on Jesus’ death and descent, Durrwell takes as his primary vantage point the resurrection of Jesus: “We ourselves announce to you the good news that what God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us...in raising up Jesus, according to what is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my son, this day I have begotten you’” (Acts 13:32-33).⁹⁵¹ The resurrection of Jesus is the work of God in his Paternity; it brings to revelatory consummation the eternal mystery of the Father’s act of generating.⁹⁵² Jesus, on his side, becomes in his risen humanity what he was since the beginning: Son of God (see 1Thess 1:10), “the first-born from the dead” (Col 1:18), “established Son of God in power...by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4).⁹⁵³ Durrwell clearly echoes Balthasar’s contention that the mission of the Son is identified with the mystery of his proper person, and as inherently concomitant the sending by the Father is one with the mystery of the first person in God.

⁹⁴⁹ A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 33.

⁹⁵⁰ Durrwell writes in *The Spirit of the Father and of the Son: Theological and Ecumenical Perspectives* (Middlegreen Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 8: “The distinction between...‘theology’ and ‘economy’ does not involve any discontinuity: in the passover of Jesus ‘theology’ becomes ‘economy’ and the eternal mystery is accomplished for us. The difference resides in that last phrase, ‘for us’. While theology considers the mystery of the Trinity in itself, the latter becomes ours through Jesus Christ: in the mystery of salvation, the Father begets his Son for us...so that we may become children of God.” Cited by A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 29.

⁹⁵¹ See *PDM*, 7.

⁹⁵² In opposition to Hegel, Durrwell holds that “God cannot be paternal according to the fullness of his divinity if the glorification of Jesus is not the extension of an eternal generation”, *PDM*, 31. My translation.

Now since, according to the biblical data, it is in view of the crucified and risen One that the words of Jesus attain their entire truth: “he who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9), the love which defines the God of Jesus Christ is by nature paschal (see 1Jn 4:8-10). “True love”, says Durrwell, “is sacrificial; it is a gift of self, an effusion that can go unto the exhaustion of self.”⁹⁵⁴ With a single leap of extrapolation, Durrwell traces the death of Christ to its source in the inner-trinitarian Father. Inasmuch as the Father “goes out of himself in engendering the Son”, love’s character of “immolation” is in the first place proper to the Father.⁹⁵⁵ Regarding the economy of salvation, Durrwell confines his consideration of “the Father’s sacrificial love” (in giving his incarnate Son) to a comparison with Abraham.⁹⁵⁶ In this respect, Durrwell’s remarks have much in common with Galot’s reflections on the self-renunciatory “suffering” of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. No attempt is made, however, to develop the implications for the trinitarian Father of sending his Son to assume the state of God-forsaken sinners, despite Durrwell’s understanding that Jesus indeed undergoes this state *pro nobis*.⁹⁵⁷ That is to say, there is no mention of what it means for the Father to “let go” of his Paternity in the One whom he sends unto a condition of self-alienation. Although Durrwell acknowledges that the Father “enters creation by exercising his Paternity...in the Son”,⁹⁵⁸ and even though he interprets the biblical motif of the “exchange of place” (the *admirabile commercium*) primarily in terms of the Son’s being made to be sin, Durrwell nonetheless overlooks the idea that the unity of self-affirmation and self-alienation exhibited by the Son in his paschal event originates in the generating/sending Father.

⁹⁵³ See *PDM*, 13. We in our turn and hence in the order of graced adoption are “regenerated” by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ through this self-same event (see 1Pt 1:3).

⁹⁵⁴ *PDM*, 163. My translation.

⁹⁵⁵ See *PDM*, 248.

⁹⁵⁶ See *PDM*, 163-64.

⁹⁵⁷ See *PDM*, 198.

⁹⁵⁸ *PDM*, 33. My translation.

Durrwell does argue, however, for the unity of “suffering” and joy in respect of God the Father. Could God remain impassible, asks Durrwell, in view of the incarnate Son’s passion and death?⁹⁵⁹

Certainly the happiness of God is inalterable. But it belongs to a great love to unite happiness and sadness. If in God love is not without resemblance to that of man--it is surely similar to the love that the presence of the Spirit enflames in the hearts of the faithful (Rom 5:5)--one must admit that the Father has been able to contemplate [the Crucified] with an immense compassion and at the same time with joy. For to suffer-with is not incompatible with infinite happiness....If, moreover, in God everything is essential and eternal, then the Father’s compassion for the Son and his nearness to men in their trials are from always. It is in an eternal contemplation that the Father regards his Christ whose sufferings are situated in time. Likewise the regard that God bears on those he has created in the Son encompasses their sufferings from eternity.⁹⁶⁰

Durrwell thus joins Balthasar, Maritain, John Paul II, and Galot among others in maintaining that there is an analogy between human suffering and the suffering of the divine Persons in the economic order, all the while refusing to ascribe univocally to God suffering as creatures experience it.⁹⁶¹

In what concerns his notion of the Father’s eternal contemplation of the “Lamb slain” and of every creature in his/her suffering, Durrwell is content to point toward the idea of an eternal action which would allow for a distinction between the timelessness of the divine action itself and the temporal effects of the divine action.⁹⁶² “One would then be close to Balthasar’s notion that the richness of temporality is present to eternity--the positivity of the effect (time) is present in the cause (eternity), this cause which is exemplary in being the original idea (and not the simple

⁹⁵⁹ See *PDM*, 167-68.

⁹⁶⁰ *PDM*, 170-71. My translation.

⁹⁶¹ See *PDM*, 181.

⁹⁶² According to J.L. Kvanvig, *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God* (London: 1986), 163, “instead of saying that in 7 BC God had not yet sent his Son, but that by 7 AD he had, we should say that God performed the following actions (or omissions) eternally: not sending his Son in 7 BC and sending his Son at some time earlier than 7 AD”.

antithesis) of the effect.”⁹⁶³ But insofar as Durrwell eschews metaphysical terminology and conceptuality, the question of divine immutability remains unresolved; indeed “the question is particularly acute at the point where Durrwell speaks of the raising of Jesus’ humanity into the Trinity”.⁹⁶⁴ Balthasar, for his part, addresses the question by offering an explication of the traditional notion of God as *actus purus* in terms of a “trinitarian event” which can uphold an analogous relationship between eternity and time.⁹⁶⁵ In the final analysis, Durrwell’s refined scriptural inquiry encounters the problems of divine immutability and impassibility but lacks the metaphysical framework with which to resolve them.⁹⁶⁶

Additional shortcomings in Durrwell’s reflections on the “suffering” of God the Father which come to light when compared with Balthasar’s treatment can be noted. It is difficult to avoid the impression that for Durrwell the Father remains the sublime spectator of the suffering of the world, far removed from the situation, even if he contemplates it with compassion. Although Durrwell refers to the doctrine of the trinitarian *perichoresis* in the context of discussing the unity of the tri-personed God, he fails to bring it into consideration here. Nor does Durrwell advance an elucidation of the Father’s modality of com-”passion” as generative of (by drawing forth) its imaging correspondence in the Son who is able to identify himself with his opposite (“made to be sin”).

Yet we find in a chapter entitled “*La vie filiale*”⁹⁶⁷ that Durrwell concurs in a general way with every major point of Balthasar’s discussion of the consciousness of Jesus concerning his divine sonship and his eschatological mission (see chapter II of this study). “The ‘I’ of the man

⁹⁶³ G.F. O’Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 161.

⁹⁶⁴ A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 32.

⁹⁶⁵ See chapter III, G.4 above; also G.F. O’Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 160-62.

⁹⁶⁶ Still, we agree with Anne Hunt that “all in all, although Durrwell’s biblical theology is not concerned to address questions properly pertinent to systematic theology and that indeed demand a properly systematic treatment his essential and welcome point is that the biblical data are a vital source in addressing such questions”, *op. cit.*, 32.

⁹⁶⁷ See in particular *PDM*, 194-211.

Jesus”, says Durrwell, “is filial. Jesus exists in turning toward the Father, in being drawn toward” the paternal love of God.⁹⁶⁸ “At the root of the human heart of Jesus, God makes himself known as the Father whose love evokes an echo, the response of prayer: ‘Abba!’...The paternal call elicits the filial invocation. Jesus is drawn to prayer by the Father who engenders him.”⁹⁶⁹ The role of Jesus in the inauguration of the kingdom is to consent to the Father whose work is to generate.⁹⁷⁰ While on earth “Jesus must yet consent to his God and Father, exercising his liberty, unto the day when he is established Son of God in power”.⁹⁷¹ Jesus even “plays an active role in his resurrection: the role of filial acquiescence”.⁹⁷² From this vantage point--namely, the entire economy of Jesus Christ--and presuming what Balthasar has called the Christological analogy of being, Durrwell perceives that the obedience of the incarnate Son traversing his passover from death to resurrection is a human expression of the Son’s divine and eternal Yes to the begetting Father.⁹⁷³ And insofar as the Son consents to the engendering prolonged in his earthly mission, he also plays a role in the outpouring of the Spirit.⁹⁷⁴ (If in making the foregoing points Durrwell’s extrapolations from the economic to the immanent Trinity are in accord with Balthasar’s own, we will see below that their positions diverge when it comes to conceiving of the person of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son.)

For the moment, however, let us note Durrwell’s affirmation that “Jesus can speak and act only by the one who engenders him”. What characterizes the consciousness of Jesus in his identity

⁹⁶⁸ *PDM*, 197. My translation.

⁹⁶⁹ *PDM*, 219. My translation.

⁹⁷⁰ See *PDM*, 202.

⁹⁷¹ *PDM*, 198. My translation.

⁹⁷² *PDM*, 207. My translation.

⁹⁷³ “In the eternal mystery, like on the cross, the Son consents to the Father who engenders him”, *PDM*, 207. And *ibid.*, 59: In the immanent life of the triune Godhead, “the Son allows the Father to engender him”. My translation.

⁹⁷⁴ See *PDM*, 207.

as Son is the perception of the Paternity of God in his regard.⁹⁷⁵ This is to be understood, says Durrwell, by reference to Jn 5:19f. which states that the Son does whatever he sees the Father doing, and the Father shows the Son everything he does.⁹⁷⁶ But if on occasion Durrwell utilizes the analogy of human interpersonal love to explain the mystery of the Trinity,⁹⁷⁷ he neither develops nor applies it systematically, nor does he benefit from the conceptual apparatus of a “theological aesthetics”.

In consequence, while Durrwell affirms with Balthasar a paternal modality of receptivity vis-à-vis the Son, he nowhere explicates the Father’s receptivity as evocative of its imaging counterpart in the Son’s (receptive) consent to his generation. Instead, paternal receptivity is considered by Durrwell in terms of the Father being provoked to generate by the Son’s love for him. “On his side, the Father is carried to love by his Son who loves him: ‘The Father loves me for this, that I lay down my life’ (Jn 10:17). The Father is provoked to love by the Son, provoked to engendering....The Spirit by which God engenders flows back from the Son to the Father. The Son is a source for the Father from whom, nonetheless, he receives all.”⁹⁷⁸ Durrwell, in our opinion, offers little by way of justifying and rendering coherent his notion of a paternal receptivity in respect of the Father’s being provoked to generating. In our estimation, there is greater theological validity to the Balthasarian position that contends: inasmuch as the Father is the alpha and the omega of the immanent begetting, we can consider the Father’s mode of activity/receptivity to be, at the same time, both *generative* and *consummative* of the Son. More specifically, we can

⁹⁷⁵ See *PDM*, 200. *Ibid.*, 197: “Jesus’ filial consciousness does not result from an ensemble of ideas, but through an immediate apprehension of God as Father.” And on p. 205, Durrwell writes: “One can think how often the light of the Father has instructed Jesus in the immediacy of his heart without the aid of external realities.” My translation.

⁹⁷⁶ See *PDM*, 26. Considering the prayer life of Jesus to which the entirety of the New Testament gives witness, Durrwell can claim that in his words and decisions Jesus is “inspired by the Father”; *PDM*, 198. Referring to Jn 5:19f., Durrwell asks: “does this not allude to the light received from the Father during these long hours of intimacy with him?”; *ibid.*, 224. My translation.

⁹⁷⁷ See, for example, *PDM*, 26, 150 and 197.

understand the Father's exercise of intellection and volition in generating, on the one hand, as originatively positing the Son as his Beloved Thou proceeding from him, and on the other hand, as consummatively deeming and glorifying the Son as his consubstantial image returning to him.

To his credit, Durrwell makes a consistent effort to understand the Father in relation to the Holy Spirit (more so than does Balthasar).⁹⁷⁹ Yet Durrwell's hermeneutical orientation towards the mystery of the Spirit also leads him to unusual problematic perspectives. According to Durrwell, since Scripture teaches us that God raised Jesus in the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11), we are to infer from this that the Spirit is the engendering power of God.⁹⁸⁰ On this basis, Durrwell considers that the divine glory, the divine omnipotence, and the divine Spirit are "three names which designate the single cause of the resurrection [of Jesus], namely, the Spirit".⁹⁸¹ From here Durrwell goes on to contend that the Spirit is "the divine operation in person".⁹⁸² "It is in the Spirit, the hypostasized power of God, that God works the generation of the Son. The Spirit is in person the eternal begetting in which God is Father."⁹⁸³ This reasoning leads Durrwell to propose that the unity of God finds its principle of intelligibility in the Spirit. "In the Spirit who is infinite love", says Durrwell, "the Father and the Son are what they are: personalized in the love that unites them....God is one, not by reason of an impersonal divine nature, but because he is Father and Son in the unique indivisible person of the Spirit."⁹⁸⁴ For Durrwell, the Spirit is the divine act of love,

⁹⁷⁸ *PDM*, 162. My translation. See also *ibid.*, 156.

⁹⁷⁹ "The generation of the Son", says Durrwell, "is unthinkable without the the Spirit"; *PDM*, 140. My translation.

⁹⁸⁰ See *PDM*, 13.

⁹⁸¹ See *PDM*, 28-29.

⁹⁸² See *PDM*, 140.

⁹⁸³ *PDM*, 142. My translation.

⁹⁸⁴ *PDM*, 158. My translation.

and all that one can say of the divinity and of its attributes are found in him. Father and Son subsist as distinct persons in the Spirit in whom they are established in otherness and unity.⁹⁸⁵

While Balthasar would agree with Durrwell that the Father engenders the Son in love, he would nonetheless object to Durrwell's formulations which tend toward collapsing the distinction between the Spirit and the divine nature or essence. It is one thing, with Balthasar, to suggest that if the Spirit is the "We" of the mutual love between the Father and the Son, and if we exclude from the divine life a temporal movement from before to after, then it is possible to consider that the Spirit would be proceeding from the Father already in the Father's act of generating, the consummation of which spiration would be given in the Son's returning of love.⁹⁸⁶ It is another thing to contend, with Durrwell, that the Spirit *is* the mutual movement of love constitutive of the divine essence and in which the Father and the Son subsist. Indeed, Durrwell's reflections bear implications which rule out conceiving the Spirit as a "who" (*principium quod*), as an hypostasis who exercises the divine nature (*principium quo*) in relation to the Father and the Son, or as one whose being-person is constituted by a relational act of self-expropriation. As a closely related problem, Durrwell has difficulty throwing light on how the Father can be understood as the source of the Spirit, since he regards the Spirit as "the womb of God and divine substance" in which the Father generates.⁹⁸⁷

⁹⁸⁵ See *PDM*, 160. *Ibid.*, 146: "The key to understanding the unspeakable mystery of God is found in the Spirit, in the infinite love in which God is Father. In the Spirit is the synthesis of all the divine perfections. All that the language of theology has called the divine essence, the divine nature, is found hypostasized in the Spirit." In addition, *ibid.*, 144: "God does not possess a divine nature from which is born the person of the Son. They are Father and Son and are God in infinite love, in the begetting that is the Spirit. The Son is 'of the same nature as the Father': he is begotten in the Spirit, in whom is found personalized all that one speaks of the divine nature." My translation.

⁹⁸⁶ See Balthasar, *Credo*, 78.

⁹⁸⁷ In *PDM*, 151, Durrwell interprets in a novel way the teaching of the Council of Toledo which states that it is from the womb of the Father, i.e., from his substance, that the Son is begotten or born. According to Durrwell, "the Spirit does not go out from the Father, even though he proceeds from him. [Concerning] the procession of the Spirit,... he is himself like the womb in which the Father engenders. The Spirit is action, an action that does not leave the one who acts.... Since it is in the Spirit that the Son is generated by the Father, the Spirit plays a quasi-maternal role. The Spirit is like the womb wherein the Son is generated. The divine substance is found personalized in the Spirit"; *ibid.*,

In sum, it seems to us that Durrwell falls short in developing sufficiently a doctrine of God the Father as the archetype of divine love whose self-disposing engenders (one with the evocation of) the response of love constitutive of the Son, who shares life and being with the Father. This weakness in Durrwell's treatment is due largely to his inclination, time and again, to explicate the divine begetting in view of the Spirit. If, for Balthasar, the scriptural claim that "God is love" (1Jn 4:8) refers premierly to the Father whose unoriginated disposal of the divinity determines it as love "from the start", for Durrwell God is love by reason of his Spirit who is the begetting.⁹⁸⁸

D. Jean Galot

Galot is among the few who have noticed and bemoaned the inadequate efforts made by theologians to reflect upon and systematize a doctrine of God the Father. As a first step toward meeting this need, Galot offers his reflections on the trinitarian Fatherhood of God in his study, *Abba, Father: Theological Insights into the First Person of the Trinity*.⁹⁸⁹ His aim, he says, is "to discover with greater precision the Father's place in the divine mystery and more carefully define his role in the work of salvation".⁹⁹⁰ As for his methodology, Galot takes an approach quite similar to our own: on the basis of the directives of the New Testament (in particular, the Johannine) texts, Galot begins by considering the human consciousness of Jesus in his relation to the Father and allows his observations to be guided by the revelatory and interpretative function of Jesus' filial activity. These biblically founded considerations justify Galot's extrapolations to the mystery of

150. My translation. Balthasar, to the contrary, asserts "it would be erroneous...to see in the Spirit the 'womb' in which generation occurs"; *Credo*, 78.

⁹⁸⁸ *PDM*, 147: "The Spirit is the divine operation, the infinite dynamic of God. God is spirit (Jn 4:24) and God is love (1Jn 4:8). Now the Spirit is at once spirit and love. There is not an impersonal divine nature in God, but everything in God possesses the nobility of the person: all the divine perfections are hypostasized in the Spirit....God is life and love by reason of his Spirit who is the begetting. The entire divine dynamic aims to 'produce' the Son." My translation.

⁹⁸⁹ Jean Galot, S.J., *Abba, Father: Theological Insights into the First Person of the Trinity*, (New York: Alba House, 1992). [From the French original: *Découvrir le Père*. (Editions SINTAL; now SURSUM).] Henceforth, *AF*.

⁹⁹⁰ *AF*, 61.

the inner-divine Trinity, his crossing the threshold to which the Johannine prologue itself leads (see Jn 1:1, 18)--in a word, to the theological transcendental conditions for the possibility of what occurs in the temporal sending of the Son as man. Thereafter, Galot follows the Thomistic *ordo doctrinae* in moving from the immanent processions to the missions in the economy of salvation. Overall, he displays familiarity with (and whenever possible endeavors to integrate) both the advances of contemporary biblical exegesis as well as the metaphysically conceived trinitarian doctrine of the Latin tradition.

Galot's point of departure in elaborating a theology of God the Father is Jesus' experience of sonship. The main ideas of his discussion can be briefly recounted. "Through the infused light granted to his human consciousness or through what might be called a mystical contact of filial union, [Jesus] had learned to know the Father"⁹⁹¹ so that, in knowing God's paternal love, Jesus might respond with the most complete filial love.⁹⁹² "The Son's filial response involves the imitation of the Father. He attained in his human existence a perfection that completely reflected the Father's perfection (Mt 5:48)."⁹⁹³ Indeed, Galot understands Jn 5:19f. to mean that "the Father wants to remain for Jesus the model that finds expression in all his Son's actions".⁹⁹⁴ These observations are in accord with Jn 1:1 which indicates that "the Word is in a dynamic situation, oriented to the Father in an eternal face to face encounter".⁹⁹⁵

Absent from Galot's reflections in *Abba, Father* is an attempt to develop the implications of the analogy obtaining between the incarnate Son's human obedience to the Father who sends him and the Son's divine and eternal correspondence to the generating Father in a way which

⁹⁹¹ *AF*, 68.

⁹⁹² *AF*, 63: "In the depths of the human soul the Father made him [Jesus] understand that he was his authentic Father...so that the most complete filial love might respond to his paternal love."

⁹⁹³ *AF*, 76.

⁹⁹⁴ *AF*, 72.

⁹⁹⁵ *AF*, 75.

systematically shifts the theological point of reference from Sonship to Paternity.⁹⁹⁶ Regrettably, in our view, Galot casts only minimal light on the theo-dramatic character of the economy of Jesus Christ. It is not that Galot entirely overlooks the theodramatic features of the triune God's economic activity. He affirms, for example, that "the Father, in sending his Son to the Cross, sacrificed himself".⁹⁹⁷ Galot states, moreover, that Jesus is impelled to surrender himself unto the Cross because he knows the love of the Father who is "first to commit itself to the path of sacrifice (Jn 3:16)".⁹⁹⁸ And when reflecting on the Father's relationship with humankind, Galot admits that "the Father assumed a risk in endowing the human person with freedom: the risk of subjecting himself to rejection and hostility".⁹⁹⁹ Despite these assertions, however, Galot does not satisfactorily locate the conditions for the possibility of these features in the Father's eternal and inner-divine begetting of the Son, nor does he do much by way of elaborating upon the various implications for a theology of the trinitarian Father in both the immanent and economic orders.

Galot does acknowledge, however, that "the Thomist teaching that the generation is exclusively by way of an act of intellection needs to be expanded".¹⁰⁰⁰ In addition to the biblical grounds which support this expansion, Galot asks us to consider that inasmuch as the generation transmits the plenitude of divine life it must necessarily include a plenitude of love.¹⁰⁰¹ Another modification of traditional Latin trinitarian theology is proposed by Galot with his contention that God the Father is constituted not only by begetting the Son but also by spirating the Spirit through

⁹⁹⁶ Although Galot's study of God the Father can be faulted in this regard, nevertheless his specifically Christological works display his competence in shifting the theological point of reference from human to divine sonship. In these Christological studies Galot focuses upon the analogy between being a divine person and being a human person in order to show how the person of Christ can be the divine Son without ceasing to be fully human. See Jean Galot, S.J., *La Personne du Christ, Recherche ontologique*, (Duculot-Lethielleux, Gembloux Belgium, 1969). The English translation is *The Person of Christ: A Theological Insight*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983). *Who is Christ?: A Theology of the Incarnation*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1981).

⁹⁹⁷ *AF*, 135.

⁹⁹⁸ *AF*, 76.

⁹⁹⁹ *AF*, 131.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *AF*, 91.

his union with the Son.¹⁰⁰² He quotes H. Barré with approval: “The Father is correlative not only to the Son, he is equally and ‘simultaneously’ correlative to the Spirit....Each of the divine persons must be conceived as correlative to the other two and as existing in himself only *in* and *through* his relationship with the other two. Classical theology probably does not take this sufficiently into account in that it considers *only* the the Fatherhood and the Sonship as ‘constitutive’ of the person of the Father and the person of the Son.”¹⁰⁰³ We have already noted that Balthasar, too, makes the same point, and indeed formulates it in a way which (not surprisingly) illuminates its inherently dramatic features.¹⁰⁰⁴

In what concerns conceiving of the Father’s relation to the Holy Spirit, Galot expressly criticizes the stance taken by Durrwell. Galot insists that the love which animates the Father’s eternal generation of the Son is not to be identified with the person of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, argues Galot, the order of the divine persons would be changed by making the Son proceed from both the Father and the Spirit.¹⁰⁰⁵ While Galot’s position is undoubtedly legitimate, it evidently

¹⁰⁰¹ For his remarks on this matter, see *AF*, 92-100 and 110.

¹⁰⁰² See *AF*, 115-16.

¹⁰⁰³ Henri Barré, *Trinité que j’adore--Perspectives théologiques*, (Paris, 1965), p. 133; quoted by Galot in *AF*, 116.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Balthasar, *TD IV*, 80: “[I]n the action of begetting and breathing-forth, [the Father] allows himself to be co-determined by the Persons who thus proceed from him; however, this does not affect his primacy in the order of the Trinity.” In *ibid.*, 76, Balthasar quotes von Speyr (*Apokalypse*, 247): “All the Persons of the Trinity determine one another reciprocally.” Elsewhere Balthasar writes: “Unity and distinction in God so far transcend what can be calculated with the limits set by numbers, so far transcend the sequence of time, that both the responsive love of the Son and the mutuality of the Spirit continue eternally to affect the very act of generation that is the eternal Source of all”; *WEL*, 16. See also Balthasar “Die Würde der Frau”, *Communio* 11 (1982) 346-352.

¹⁰⁰⁵ See *AF*, 112. Galot continues: “The Holy Spirit is love in person inasmuch as he is the mutual love that unites the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit does not participate in the generation of the Son; he is derived from this generation by reason of the fact that the Father’s love for his Son is reciprocated in a unifying love that forms a third divine person.”

A particular weakness, in our view, of Galot’s trinitarian doctrine is his attempt to distinguish the generation of the Son from the spiration of the Spirit by restricting the act of knowing to the Father’s act of generating--the implication being that the Son does not exercise the divine intellect in responding to the Father in love. “Only the Father knows, and he alone begets by way of thought. [But] he is not the only one who loves, since he loves in union with the Son....It is with the Son and through love that the Father breathes forth the Spirit”; *AF*, 114. Yet can the Son respond to the Father in love without knowing the Father? Galot, it seems, is denying a properly filial exercise of the divine intellect as integral to the spiration. But is not infinite knowledge a perfection which the Father wills to bestow on the Son?

ignores or rejects Durrwell's reading of those Scripture passages which indicate that the Father begets his Son in the Spirit, whereas Balthasar makes the effort not only to correct Durrwell's unbalanced formulations but also to uphold the kernel of theological truth contained therein. (For if the Spirit is the mutual love uniting Father and Son, the Spirit may be said to be proceeding "already" in the Father's love for the Son he is generating which love focuses on mutuality "from the start".)

There is one issue on which Galot and Balthasar unqualifiedly disagree. Galot echoes the neo-scholastic opinion in claiming that any one of the three divine persons could have become incarnate. "In truth the freedom of God's power is immense, and we cannot reduce it to the possibility of one type of incarnation, the incarnation of the Word."¹⁰⁰⁶ But with this remark Galot obfuscates the properly theo-logical significance and ontological coherence which underpins such New Testament texts as Eph 1:4ff., Col 1:15ff., Jn 1:1-4,18 and 1Jn 4:12. Not only does Galot appear to veer towards a voluntaristic notion of divine omnipotence, but he falls into contradiction with statements he himself makes elsewhere in the same study,¹⁰⁰⁷ not to mention the directives of the ITC in its document, "Theology, Christology, Anthropology".¹⁰⁰⁸ In this matter, Galot can learn from Durrwell that if God the Father has not entered the world as incarnate, it is because "the one who is without origin does not come to the interior of the world where everything has an origin. Rather, he enters creation by exercising his paternity there...appearing in the Son."¹⁰⁰⁹

Regarding the problem of the "suffering" of God, we remind the reader that we have already discussed the points of agreement and disagreement between Galot and Balthasar in chapter III, G.4 above.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *AF*, 104.

¹⁰⁰⁷ See *AF*, 108 and 218-19.

¹⁰⁰⁸ ITC, "Theology, Christology, Anthropology", I, C, 1, p. 211: "The economy of Jesus Christ reveals the triune God." And *ibid.*, 2.1, p. 211: "The mystery of Jesus Christ belongs to the structure of the Trinity."

E. Final Assessment

In closing it should be evident that the contemporary Catholic theology of the trinitarian Father (which, despite its relatively undeveloped state, is gradually drawing the scholarly attention it deserves) has admirable proponents in John Paul II, Durrwell, and Galot. Each bases his reflections solidly on Scripture and hence is committed to perceiving the person and mission of the Son as the definitive revelation of another person: the Father. Furthermore, each sets out to construct a conceptual bridge connecting the mysteries of the Cross and the Trinity. All are concerned to stress the relevance of the mystery of the Father for Christian existence. Not one among them is content simply to restate observations of the past, but all make an effort to unfold and give expression to the untapped potential of traditional belief. To this end, their respective treatments do not exhibit an exclusive allegiance to a philosophical framework of substance-based metaphysics, which framework had traditionally conditioned the approach to a doctrine of God; each seeks rather to reconstruct where necessary a philosophical framework that allows for the contributions of personalist ontology and phenomenology (although Durrwell, for his part, generally shies away from employing philosophy as a conceptual tool).

When we look back to the main points which have emerged from this conversation between Balthasar and the representatives of a Roman Catholic theology of God the Father, we should note that among the triad of representatives only Durrwell explicitly refers to the thought of Balthasar within his own treatment (and does so on only two occasions). Indeed, in practice our sample of representatives engages only minimally in direct critical assessment of the ideas of other theologians on the subject of the trinitarian Father. This lack of dialogue on the horizontal plane (theologians speaking to and of theologians) may well be due to the relative scarcity of treatises to

¹⁰⁰⁹ Durrwell, *PDM*, 33. My translation.

date devoted specifically to our subject. It may also be indicative of a legitimate concern that what is of first importance is to establish a vertically directed dialogue, if you will, with the Father who expresses himself through the testimony of Jesus Christ--a vertically directed discourse which advances upward by the guidance of the solemn teaching of the Church and with the assistance of the insights proffered by classical and contemporary philosophy.

The fact that, despite the relatively minimal horizontal discussion among these theologians, many of the fundamental ideas found in their respective works are held in common permits an interpretation that sees this to a certain measure as confirmation of the basic outline which Balthasar sketches of God the Father as the central actor of theo-drama. Excepting (i) Durrwell's tendency to collapse the distinction between the Spirit and the divine nature, and (ii) the divergence of opinion between Galot and Balthasar concerning an aspect of the problem on the unity of divine immutability and affectivity, nothing substantive is asserted by any of them that precludes or stands in direct opposition to Balthasar's most salient reflections. At most, the possibility remains that one or more among them, if pressed, might prefer to exhibit greater reticence than does Balthasar in extrapolating from the economic to the immanent Trinity.

But what about this "ever-more" exertion which Balthasar displays in elucidating the mystery of the eternal Father: can it be justified, and does it produce an instance of genuine theological development? Such questions will be addressed in our next and final chapter.

V

Conclusion

We began our study of Balthasar's theology of God the Father by considering his suggestion that the creative activity of the dramatic poet can serve as a metaphor of the economic activity of the God of Jesus Christ. In our first chapter we identified and examined the principal elements which constitute the auctorial mode of creativity in relation to that of the actor and the director respectively. Special attention was given to "the drama within the drama" involving the author and the actor, which we interpreted in terms of a collaborative work initiated by the author that unfolded as a process of mutual self-emptying, leaving-free, dependence, *disponibilité*, self-exposure, receptivity, and so forth. The generative nature of these modalities as originating in the dramatic poet was indicated, and we went on to trace the generative efficacy of the auctorial mode of creativity through its mediation by the actor to the audience.

Having treated the triad of dramatic creativity--author, actor, and director--in a way which facilitated the application and appreciation of its illuminative capacity as a metaphor of the economic Trinity, we then considered in our second chapter the theo-dramatic interplay between the Father who sends and the Son who is sent. We were able to confirm Balthasar's principle that the participants in theo-drama (the *dramatis personae*) can only be defined on the basis of the action. With this principle established and within the context of a Christological analogy of being,

we systematically shifted the theological point of reference from the personal action of the incarnate Son to the correlative action of the Father-Sender and discerned thereby that we could ascribe to the Father's mode of infinite freedom the characteristics of self-renunciation, kenosis, letting-be, disposing of and being disposed of, dependence, and so on--albeit as characterizing the personal action *of the unoriginated Origin*, these traits were specified according to the nonreversible order of the trinitarian relations and thus took on an asymmetrical profile when ascribed to the Son in his relation to the Father. Indeed, never losing sight of the Johannine axiom that everything the Father does he shows to the Son so that the Son can do likewise (see Jn 5:19-20), it was maintained that these characteristics of the Father's activity are integral to his engendering a collaborative response in Jesus, his incarnate Word and Image. This approach brought into prominence the "drama within the drama" between the Father and the Son for the life of the world.

Given that the economy of Jesus Christ is the sole definitive basis of our knowledge of the eternal trinitarian Father, our next step (Part Two, chapter III) was to follow Balthasar's lead in extrapolating from the interplay between the Father-Sender's mode of infinite freedom and the incarnate Son's correspondence in freedom (both infinite and finite) to its inner-divine presuppositions. What emerged was a configuration of the mode of divinity constitutive of the Father-Begetter, the main lines of which we depicted schematically as follows: (i) the paternal mode of infinite freedom: unconditioned initiative as self-gift; (ii) the paternal kenosis; (iii) the paternal leaving-free, concerning which we proposed a reinterpretation of divine omnipotence in terms of the Father's all-powerful powerlessness; (iv) the paternal receptivity, which we found was possible to predicate of the Father with the support of a trinitarian ontology of inter-personal love; (v) the paternal dependence and expectation; and (vi) the paternal affectivity of the immutable God. In regard to each aspect of the Father's mode of absolute love, we developed an understanding in

terms of its inherent efficacy to generate its perfect reflection: the Son's begotten mode of infinite love.

The focus in our third chapter did not remain fixed upon the Father's generative act in God, but we reversed our movement and presented a three-tiered systematic exposition of the mystery of the Father starting "from above": advancing from the Father's immanent generating of the consubstantial Son, to the Father's economic sending of the Son, to the Father's creating human beings for the purpose of begetting them to be adopted "sons in the Son". In permitting ourselves an extended treatment that follows the *ordo doctrinae*, we altered somewhat the route Balthasar takes in *Theo-Drama*...but only somewhat. For time and again when Balthasar enters upon an explication of one of the central doctrines of Christianity (e.g., creation, covenant of grace, incarnation/soteriology), he begins by inserting a mini-treatise, so to speak, on the inner-trinitarian grounds for the possibility of the particular matter at hand.¹⁰¹⁰ This is indicative of Balthasar's concern not to disengage functional from ontological considerations. It is also indicative of Balthasar's intention to restore primacy of place in theological discourse to the mystery of God, thus offering a corrective to the modern tendency to reduce the divine to a function of human realization. The advantage of employing the traditional *ordo doctrinae* in our third chapter is that it brought these concerns to the forefront within a systematic presentation and in the process facilitated our apprehending what in Balthasar is a distinctive contribution to a doctrine of God the Father. Another closely related gain is that it enabled us to appreciate more readily Balthasar's efforts to answer Hegel's objections to the classical formulations of the immanent Trinity by means of a *theo-dramatic* theory: granted that "the full doctrine of the Trinity can be unfolded only on the basis of a theology of the Cross",¹⁰¹¹ when we reversed direction what appeared more pronounced was

¹⁰¹⁰ See, for example, *TD* 2, 256ff., and *TD* 4, 323ff.

¹⁰¹¹ *TD* 4, 319.

Balthasar's account of the utterly positive seriousness of unlimited self-expropriation between the Persons of the eternal Trinity as the original template for the creaturely image of that "earnest" self-communication which risks suffering and death. Taking a vantage point "from above" allowed us to underscore Balthasar's position that the immanent Trinity does not need the world in order to be deemed worthy of divinity.

When next we examined more closely the relation between trinitarian doctrine and soteriology, we discovered that Balthasar's theology of the Father's eternal generative act elucidates the primal ontic and explanatory grounds for what plays out in the Christ event: specifically, the mystery of the *admirable commercium* unto the *sub contrario*. In the course of our discussion we rendered explicit a possible interpretation of Phil 2:6ff. which suggested that if the Son deems the form of God not a thing to be grasped, this action bespeaks a filial response engendered by the Father who always already disposes of the divinity in the form of a paternal kenosis. We also saw how it is possible to understand the Son's *Hinterlegung*--his leaving the power and glory of his Sonship with the Father who sends him--as the begotten counterpart to the Father's leaving his Paternity with the One whom he sends. By considering, moreover, that the Father sends the Son to assume the place of God-forsaking sinners, we were able to argue that, in this respect, the Father's depositing his Paternity with the Son takes the (economic) form of allowing himself to be forsaken. From this point of view, we perceived that the Father offers up himself (albeit in a non-incarnational manner) in offering up the Son for the sin of the world. We indicated, further, how the Father's forsakenness during the passion of the Son can be understood as a modality of his union with the Son. In so doing we identified and developed the (scripturally founded) dialectic inscribed in the Father's generative act--namely, the Father's self-withdrawal from and remaining in the Son--in such a way that this dialectic may be regarded as the ultimate inner-divine presupposition for the paradox of the Son's being both abandoned and accompanied

by the Father at the climax of the temporal mission. We also addressed what Balthasar regards as the basic problem of theodramatic theory, namely, how to reconcile divine immutability and absolute love's affectivity--the two aspects being integral to "the concept of God as he reveals himself".¹⁰¹² We proposed that if the God of biblical revelation is both immutable and capable of being affected, the roots of this possibility can be traced to the mystery of the inner-trinitarian Father. In bringing this to light, we drew together the modalities and aspects of the Fatherhood of God which were treated previously, and saw them as indicating that the unity of immutability and affectivity originates in the primal kenosis of the generating Father. We also considered how it is possible to speak of an economic extension of the Father's affectivity and com-"passion" in relation to the Son whom he gave over for the salvation of the world.

The aim of our third tier in chapter three was to elaborate a doctrine of God the Father in connection with theological anthropology. The anthropology that resulted not only accords with the Christocentric anthropology of Vatican II, but moves beyond it towards the development of a Theocentric anthropology: that is, towards an ontology of human personhood built upon the creation, election, and consummation of the human person in the Son's mode of being divine vis-à-vis the Father-Begetter.¹⁰¹³ We found that the affirmation of a mutual relationship of infinite freedom in God--an interplay of self-disposing between the Father and the Son--provides the transcendental theological ground for the covenantal relationship in which finite freedom is established as God's vis-à-vis. It is by virtue of the Father's leaving-free the Son within the trinitarian Godhead that the creature can, in an analogous manner, be left free over against God within the covenant of grace. We discussed, in addition, the evocative efficacy of the Father's modality of leaving-free to draw forth from finite freedom a collaborative assent to its own

¹⁰¹² See *ITC*, "Theology, Christology, Anthropology" (1981), II, B, 4.2, pp. 221-22.

authentic realization. A segment of this discussion was developed within the context of Balthasar's meta-anthropological approach to a natural knowledge of God. We also dealt with a theology of death by considering that if death as we experience it within the order of sin and redemption can become, with and in Christ, the supreme expression of filial love, such a possibility proceeds from the inmost recesses of trinitarian life: the generating Father's self-surrender without remainder. Finally, we suggested that the ultimate foundation of Balthasar's hope in the prospect of universal salvation rests upon the God and Father of Jesus Christ who, in showing his omnipotence in powerlessness and his immutability in the affectivity of love, which paternal qualities are interpreted by the crucified and forsaken Son, may yet engender an assent to the grace of sonship in the freedom of every human being.

A particular strength of Balthasar's theology is that by approaching the Father's inner-trinitarian generation of the Son from its definitive revelatory basis in the Christ event, Balthasar is able to elaborate a doctrine of God the Father that retains "the form and content of the 'event' of the saving Trinity".¹⁰¹⁴ The resultant doctrine, so thoroughly cast in a soteriological setting, presents the eternal Father as the *dramatis persona* whose mode of being divine accounts for the way in which he works as the "original actor" who brings the world to its consummation in Christ.¹⁰¹⁵ Insofar as the Father's sending the Son is paradigmatic of the primordial mystery of the immanent begetting, Balthasar develops an understanding of the eternal Father that allows us to speak coherently of the Father as having graciously involved himself with and allowed himself to be affected by the creaturely freedom he himself bestows, but as having done so precisely in function of the generative efficacy of his self-communication and without vitiating his

¹⁰¹³ The theocentric anthropology proposed here does not simply revert to the theocentrism of neo-scholasticism, for example, which was inclined to segregate the one divine substance from the three divine persons.

¹⁰¹⁴ *LA*, 72, n.2.

transcendence as if he were entangled in inner-worldly processes. Such a theology overcomes a weakness inherent in the more traditional approaches which, as W. Kasper has remarked, exhibit the tendency to render “the inner-trinitarian Fatherhood of the Father...irrelevant to God’s relationship to the world and human beings”.¹⁰¹⁶

Another gain, arguably, is that Balthasar’s theology conveys more fully and explicitly than traditional Latin trinitarian doctrine the inter-personal vitality of the trinitarian relations as attested to by the biblical data. This is done in such a way that Balthasar advances beyond the longstanding intra-subjective approach to conceiving the distinction among the divine persons by constructing as a complementary approach an inter-subjective interpretation. Without discarding the traditional terminology of processions, subsistent relations, relations of opposition, and missions, what emerges in Balthasar’s treatment is a profile, if you will, of the three *dramatis personae* whose distinctive modes of being divine are explicated in terms of a newly fashioned trinitarian ontology of inter-personal love.¹⁰¹⁷ This ontology of love, which is in conformity with scriptural revelation and Christian experience, permits Balthasar to modify some of the attributes traditionally ascribed to the divinity. For him, it does not suffice to deduce the divine perfections “in abstract *a priori* fashion as the perfections of the metaphysically-conceived Godhead”.¹⁰¹⁸ What is required for an adequate Christian rendering of the divine perfections is that they be considered, indeed reconsidered, in light of the threefold action of the divine *personae* as disclosed in the Christ event. In consequence, Balthasar proposes the possibility of predicating receptivity, dependence, “weakness”, and affectivity of the Father-Begetter’s distinct mode of absolute love, perceiving these qualities as intrinsic to the engendering of the perfectly corresponsive Son-Beloved.

¹⁰¹⁵ See *MP*, 136.

¹⁰¹⁶ W. Kasper, *GJC*, 147.

¹⁰¹⁷ A summary overview of this feature of Balthasar’s theology is given by A. Hunt in, *op. cit.*, 113-18.

¹⁰¹⁸ See A. Hunt, *op. cit.*, 120.

Concerning Balthasar's attempt to identify the transcendental theological grounds of the Christ event in the eternal and inner-divine event of the Father's generating the Son, the question may be raised whether Balthasar is justified in exhibiting such boldness in extrapolating from the concrete, historical pattern of Jesus' sonship to the mystery of the Trinitarian Father.¹⁰¹⁹ It is noteworthy that the International Theological Commission has felt obliged to fault, not the kind of positive transposition of the trinitarian implications of Jesus' temporal mission as exemplified by Balthasar, but rather the contrary tendency in contemporary theology which restricts discussion to the economic Trinity while neglecting the immanent. According to the ITC, what warrants criticism is an exaggerated reserve that "places a veil between men and the eternal Trinity", a stance which "leads to a certain 'agnosticism'" regarding the immanent Trinity. Such a position comes very close to saying that although we can know God's acting for us as Father, Son, and Spirit, we dare not extend this knowledge back into the eternal realm and speak of God in himself. While we may speak endlessly of the economic Trinity, we should remain silent before the mystery of the immanent Trinity. Against this perspective the ITC argues that "if God is greater than anything we can think about him, Christian revelation asserts that that 'extra' greatness is always of a trinitarian nature".¹⁰²⁰ Balthasar, for his part, is well aware that the "extra greatness" of the divine realm necessitates that a doctrine of God the Father develop within an analogical context.¹⁰²¹ Yet as one whose theological discourse is centered upon the incarnation of the Father's Word in

¹⁰¹⁹ See Mark A. McIntosh, *Christology From Within: Spirituality and the Incarnation in Hans Urs von Balthasar* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 73.

¹⁰²⁰ ITC, "Theology, Christology, Anthropology" (1981), I, C, 2.1, p. 211-12. Elsewhere in the same document the ITC affirms that "in the witness of the primitive Church, it was always held with certainty that through the event of Jesus Christ and the event of the gift of the Holy Spirit God had revealed himself to us as he is. In himself he is such as appeared to us"; *ibid.*, 1.1, p. 211. Indeed, "the Father's relationship to the incarnate Son, in the communication of the gift of the Spirit, is the very relationship that constitutes the Trinity"; *ibid.*, 3, p. 212.

¹⁰²¹ Thomas A. Smail has rightly remarked that God's Fatherhood is not to be defined by simply projecting human fatherhood onto the screen of the heavens where it gains infinite dimensions. Quite the reverse: God himself provides us with his own self-definition of Fatherhood by graciously projecting his image on a human scale. The definitive projection and image of God the Father is his only Son-made-man. For the Christian, then, the norm of

Christ, Balthasar regards the tendency to remain ensconced in the *via negativa* without traversing the *via eminentiae* in earnest as betraying a theological indigence. In his own words:

The God of natural theology, distanced from all worldly being by the *major dissimilitudo* of his act of being, is primarily negatively incomprehensible. ...However, when God, whom no man has ever seen, is “interpreted” (Jn 1:18) by his Son in human words and deeds, we find that the negative incomprehensibility turns into a positive one....There is a kind of Christian familiarity with the mystery of God on the part of the believer, equally at home with the most profound adoration and a childlike closeness. For the realm of infinite freedom, now opened up, is always both things at once: it is both the realm of God’s incomprehensible sovereignty--beyond our grasp at all points--and the realm of the unlimited trinitarian communication of the inner-divine love.¹⁰²²

Moreover, the importance and appropriateness of rendering an account of the gospel facts by way of the *via eminentiae* we saw to be linked in Balthasar’s mind to what is arguably the predominant theme in Johannine theology: namely, the unity of having knowledge of God and being begotten of God. In our examination and elaboration of the modalities and aspects that Balthasar considers to be constitutive of the Father’s mode of divinity, we brought to light the efficacy of the Father’s mode of being-divine [*Gottsein*] to elicit an imaging correspondence in the Son, and understood the evocative function of the Father’s self-showing as integral to the dynamic of the inner-divine begetting as well as the latter’s prolongation in the temporal sending. This interpretation, as we said, sprang from the premises afforded Balthasar in Johannine thought particularly, even as its intelligibility was enhanced by way of applying an intersubjective ontology. Virtually inseparable from these considerations was a kind of Johannine imperative, if you will: inasmuch as God graciously extends to humankind the relationship of natural Fatherhood in which he stands to his only-begotten, it becomes imperative that *we* see and know the Father in his

fatherhood (and inseparably, of fatherly love) is to be discerned in the dealings between God the Father and Jesus. See Smail, *The Forgotten Father* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 56.

¹⁰²² TD 2, 260.

(interpretive) Word-Son and are thereby begotten of God.¹⁰²³ For it is in apprehending by the Spirit of truth how God disposes of his divinity--and premierly as Father--for our sake yet as expressive of his most intimate constitution that we are persuaded to allow God to father us in and with his Son. This, we discovered, is the fundamental tenet underpinning Balthasar's efforts to speculate on the mystery of the inner-trinitarian Father.

All the same, "one may of course have doubts about the degree to which the earthly life of Christ can inform about the eternal life of the Trinity", as M. MacIntosh has duly remarked.¹⁰²⁴ In addition, one may bemoan the lack of philosophical linguistic precision in Balthasar's approach to understanding the interplay of love between the begetting Father and the eternally begotten Son: for instance, that enormously mysterious dialectic intrinsic to the Father's self-giving which entails at once his remaining with and withdrawing from the Son. Greater precision was achieved when we moved downward, so to speak, to connect this articulation of the mystery of trinitarian difference-in-union with the metaphysical conception of God's causal activity as at once immanent in and transcendent to his creation. But as G. F. O'Hanlon points out, theological discourse which attends to the "extra greatness" of the eternal Trinity must tolerate an imprecision appropriate to the limitations of human knowledge and language. "[T]here is an imprecision inherent in the analogous treatment of mystery, which, far from being vague, is the more proper and exact way to conduct a theological inquiry of this nature".¹⁰²⁵ Indeed, for Balthasar, inasmuch as that than which nothing greater can be conceived is the God of Jesus Christ, that "extra greatness" is of a liveliness of tri-personal love which--precisely as such and not as reduced by abstraction to a metaphysical causal principle--is worthy of the believer's unreserved surrender in letting the Father's love come

¹⁰²³ See Jn 1:1, 18; 3:16; 5:19-20; 14:9-11; 15:9; 1 Jn 2:5-6, 14, 29; 3:2-3, 9-10; 4:7-14.

¹⁰²⁴ Mark A. McIntosh, *op. cit.*, 73.

¹⁰²⁵ G.F. O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 172.

to perfection in him/her in imitation of Christ.¹⁰²⁶ Nevertheless, more precise formulations of Balthasar's insights may yet be achieved through a sustained and detailed conversation with other viewpoints, both philosophical and theological--an undertaking which Balthasar himself tended to forego. Such a project, in addition, would facilitate a more conclusive assessment of Balthasar's work.

Irregardless of the provisional nature of an appraisal at present, the discussion that we initiated between Balthasar and other contemporary Roman Catholic theologians (viz., John Paul II, Durrwell, Galot, as well as the ITC) indicated that in its main features, Balthasar's theology of God the Father is generally if not definitively supported. In summarizing our own predominantly positive assessment, we can do no better than to echo the words of G. F. O'Hanlon who, after examining Balthasar's position on divine immutability, concludes: "given the inner consistency between the different parts of his account, the intelligible unity of his overall position,...and its status as a valid possible interpretation of Scripture, then it is reasonable to suggest that where his account [may call for correction or modification], it will be done in a manner which will not contradict but rather further develop its main lines".¹⁰²⁷

As it stands, Balthasar's theology of the trinitarian Father, in finding a way to affirm the "supra-feminine" qualities of the eternal Begetter (such as receptivity and the ability to be affected), has established a positive basis from which to address the concerns of feminist theology.¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²⁶ For this reason Balthasar, no doubt, would agree with M. Scheeben's defense of theological reflection which, in attempting to thrust deeply into the abyss of the Trinity, assumes a more contemplative disposition and expression. "We realize these thoughts are rather mystical in character....We acknowledge that they parade before our own mind in shadowy outline. But they are suggested often enough in the Fathers [as well as in Scripture], and may afford to such souls as are not in eternal quest of the stark austerity of intellectual concepts rich matter for lofty and loving contemplation." Matthias J. Scheeben, *op. cit.*, 446-47.

¹⁰²⁷ G.F. O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*, 172. Although O'Hanlon's statement is directly concerned with the immutability of God in Balthasar's theology, his assessment is equally appropriate in regard to Balthasar's theology of God the Father.

¹⁰²⁸ It is worth recalling Balthasar's remarks in *Credo*, 30, where he argues that "it is because he bears fruit out of himself and requires no fructifying that he is called Father, and not in the sexual sense, for he will be the Creator of man and woman, and thus contains the primal qualities of woman in himself in the same simultaneously

Similarly, Balthasar's conception of the Father's generative act as entailing unoriginated modalities of leaving-free, self-renunciation, all-powerful powerlessness, gratitude, and receptivity yields a new approach to the difficult problem of rendering coherent the mystery of divine predestination while upholding a genuine interplay between infinite and finite freedom. Since this problem, in its turn, is connected with the objections raised by modern systematic atheism to the view that human freedom has an origin and end beyond itself, Balthasar's proposals may make a contribution extending into the area of fundamental theology.

It is our hope that this study, notwithstanding its limitations, has served to indicate how Balthasar's theodramatic approach may serve as a catalyst in the ongoing elaboration of a theology of the Father who "so loved the world" (Jn 3:16).

transcending way as those of man. (The Greek *gennao* can imply both siring and bearing, as can the word for to come into being: *ginomai*)." Also pertinent here is our reference to the supra-feminine quality of God the Father in the context of discussing paternal receptivity; see chapter III, E..

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